

Bad Times – Chapter 1

“Is that all you were able to get at the store?”

“Sam’s Club is limiting purchases on several things and Costco was out. I had to put in 5-gallons of gas and that cost me \$25. The only thing I got at Costco was 5 chickens and a large package of their ground beef. I got beans and rice at Sam’s Club and enough flour, sugar and oil to bake bread for a month.”

“Did you buy Jiffy cornbread mixes?”

“I cleaned off the shelf. I hope what you said is correct, beans, rice and cornbread provide 100% of the protein a person needs.”

“What about pasta and sauces?”

“I only got a few. I got an 8 pound bag of elbow macaroni and 5 pound bag of wide egg noodles. I also got a case of diced tomatoes so we’ll be eating a lot of goulash. What was that you suggested, doing beans on Saturday and making a large pot of goulash mid-week?”

“That plus baking bread on Saturday; I think the bad times are here to stay.”

“I’ll save the chickens for Sunday dinner. The potatoes in the stores were just awful. I only bought enough to go with the chicken.”

The conversation obviously wasn’t going on during the Great Depression; there wasn’t a Costco or Sam’s Club back then. No, it occurred at the tail end of the current Recession that was fast becoming the new Great Depression. Costco was set up in 1976 and Sam’s Club in 1983. The two of them are number 1 and number 2 in retail sales in their industry. I worked as a partsman for a Ford auto dealer and Ruth worked at the library. My name’s Sam George and I am 52. I’ve been on the job 30 years but Ruth only started hers 4 years ago when we had trouble making ends meet.

If there was any good news, it was that the small 5-acre patch on the edge of town was paid off. After she went to work, it became harder to grow our garden and we began to buy more and more at the stores. The thing is, if the green beans needed to be picked and canned on Tuesday, it was pretty hard to let them go until Saturday. Besides, Saturday would be occupied boiling beans and baking bread. The date is roughly the first of April, 2008.

“Can you come pick me up?”

“What’s up?”

“I just got laid off, Sam.”

“I’ll get an hour off and come get you Ruth. I guess we’ll get to plant a garden this year, after all.”

“I’ll make a list of seeds while I’m waiting and you can pick them up on your way home. I can use the potato eyes to plant potato plants.”

The list was for heirloom seeds and included tomatoes, onions, green beans, radishes, carrots, cucumbers, corn, assorted peppers, head lettuce, cabbage, peas, pinto beans, small white and large white beans, pumpkins and squash. Over the years, we had accumulated maybe 600 quart and 300 pint canning jars. In addition to the seed, she asked me to get canning lids. When you buy them by the case of 60 dozen the price is slightly less, so I bought 2 cases or 1,440 lids.

It took time to till the garden spot and I did that with my small rototiller on Saturday while she did her thing. I went over it twice adding one bag of fertilizer before I made the first pass. After two trips, it was as smooth as a baby’s behind. Then I got out the roll of yellow string and laid out the rows. Ruth took out time to tell me what to plant in each row and when to do it. After Sunday church and fried chicken, I finished the first round of planting. I had a fair amount of potato eyes to plant.

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“Sam, I went online and checked our favorite websites. From what I read, I’m glad we could plant a garden this year; without it we might not eat.”

“I’m not a bit surprised Ruth. I’ll tell you what is troubling me. The state is outlawing ammo without a serial number. None of my surplus has serial numbers and they say I have to turn it in for free by July 1, 2011. China is using all the American money they get to build a huge fleet of ships and aircraft. Their people are starving or close to it. They can’t buy enough food on the open market.”

“So?”

“So, the largest producer of rice in Southeast Asia is Vietnam with Thailand in second place. Twenty percent of all calories consumed worldwide are from rice. I half expect the Chinese to invade one or both countries.”

“Who exports rice?”

“The largest three exporting countries are Thailand (26% of world exports), Vietnam (15%), and the US (11%), while the largest three importers are Indonesia (14%), Bangladesh (4%), and Brazil (3%). Although China and India are the top two largest producers of rice in the world, both of countries consume the majority of the rice produced domestically leaving little to be traded internationally.”

Ruth and I live in The Big Valley, the San Joaquin. Rice was grown in the Sacramento Valley and most of the production was the variety known as Calrose. It's a medium grain, sticky rice used in Sushi. Some people produced Jasmine rice as well. I checked one of our 50 pound bags of rice and it was from Thailand. I'd have to squeak out enough cash to buy another couple of bags at Costco, providing they had any. I'll tell you, if necessary, I could live on beans and rice for a while; but not forever.

"The Dow was down another \$400 today."

"Is it going into the toilet?"

"Who knows? The boss called me into his office today and brought up the subject of early retirement. Mandatory retirement age is 65, regardless of the number of years on the job. He said I'd get a reduced pension because of my age, but they would pay our health insurance for the full time."

"Were you given a choice?"

"No, but he did mention that the company was planning on making some layoffs."

"Based on seniority?"

"No, based on your job. We have three partsmen and I make the most. There's a golden handshake equal to six month's wages in addition to the health insurance."

"Would the pension start right away?"

"Yes it would."

"And the alternative would be to draw unemployment?"

"That's correct. It's limited currently to 26 weeks. It's not much more than the pension I would draw."

"If you're asking my opinion, I'd say go for the pension. I might be able to get a job. If not, we'll just have to tighten our belts."

"If you can get a job, I'll learn how to can so we can put up all of the food."

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Sound familiar? Across the US, the story was much the same as firms let people go to stay in business by cutting costs. In March the unemployment rate rose to 5.1% and in April, it would be a similar rise, according to pundits. I thought it over and told the boss that I would take the deal. He said my last day of work would be Wednesday, April 30 because it would take a few days to get everything setup.

My taxable pension amounted to around 60% of my wages, about the same as I would have gotten on long term disability. From now on, we'd drive Ruth's car that got a semi-reasonable 25mpg. My old pickup maybe got 17mpg; right after a tune up. On the last day, they had a going away party for those of us who had opted to retire. There were some who hadn't accepted the offer and they were laid off. I had hoped for a luncheon plate with meats and a keg of beer; we got cake and punch.

To limit the hit we'd take on taxes, the severance check was divided into 13 separate checks. They, and my final check, all deposited just fine. I knew that they'd clear because I banked at the same bank as the dealership and the bank checks those things. With the company paying for both sides of the health insurance, those checks were larger by the amount of my health insurance premiums too.

"When do we break even and when do we fall behind?"

"Ruth, I don't think that we will. Especially considering what we've planted or will plant in the garden. I think we should take the pickup to town tomorrow and hit both Costco and Sam's Club. We ought to hit Wally World too for bread flour. We could get one of those Country Living grain mills and buy some wheat. We have enough flour for now, or will have after tomorrow for a long while. The prices can't go any which way, but up."

"If you're going to grind wheat, you might just as well grind corn. I can make Masa for tortillas, if you like. You just soak the corn in some limewater, grind it and roll it out. I can also make flour tortillas for burritos."

"Can you make tamales?"

"That's a family affair, but we'll make a bunch."

For many Hispanic families, it was in fact a Christmas tradition. Ruth and I had different tastes; for example, she liked soft tacos while I liked the corn tacos. I liked to load my burritos up with beans, beef and cheese and I could teach Taco Bell a thing or two about real bean and beef burritos. When I was young and living in the Midwest, I became partial to Hormel Beef Tamales. You might be able to buy them somewhere in California; I had no idea where.

I took just enough money out of one of those final checks to buy a sow and a cow. We didn't really have a barn; it was a general purpose pole building with tin siding. A little lumber and a few nails created two pens, one for the sow and another for the cow. I also build a stanchion so I could milk her when she came in. Neither Ruth nor I drank much milk; it went on cereal or for hot chocolate. The guy that sold me the livestock also sold me feed and man, was it expensive. Have you priced corn, oats or soy beans lately? Alfalfa was \$5 a bale; which was about \$135 per ton.

I picked up some pig wire and steel posts so I could build an outside area for the sow; the cow had free run of our fenced in acreage. I dug a trench and buried the wire because I didn't know whether a hog would root its way out of the pen or not. And, of course, I helped with the harvesting and canning. Meanwhile, I did a little research and learned that the leghorn chicken was one of the most popular commercial breeds of chicken worldwide. They were good egg layers, producing around 300 eggs per year. However, they could be noisy, flighty, and easily excited. Leghorns mature quickly, but are generally not considered to be large birds; they average from 3 lbs to 4 lbs.

"Do we want to try and raise chickens?"

"What did you have in mind, Sam?"

"Build a hen house with roosts and fence in a chicken area. We could pick up a hundred chicks when they're available and sell the eggs. If we didn't get any roosters, we wouldn't have to worry about bloody eggs. We could butcher them as we went along because they reach full weight in just a few weeks. I'd be willing to gather the eggs and wash them."

"How do you keep them from flying over the fence?"

"Wiki says to clip the long feathers on one wing."

"Are we going to become farmers?"

"I was thinking more like keeping one cow, for milk of course, one sow to produce pigs and a few chickens. When the cow got old enough, we'd keep a heifer and butcher the cow for ground beef and we could do the same thing with the sow and have her made into whole hog sausage."

"Are their specific markets for old sows and old cows?"

"The cows make up the boneless beef market while the sows are called cull sows and you're better off butchering them than selling them. I looked and there are boneless beef futures but no culled sow futures. I checked Reuters and backed that up by checking the Chicago Mercantile Exchange."

"Is that cow going to get into the fruit and nut trees?"

"I was planning on more fencing before I let her out; probably an electric fence."

"How much milk does a cow produce?"

"Maybe 6 gallons a day, why?"

"Because, Sam, we drink between a pint and a quart per day."

“I was thinking about trying my hand at making Colby and Jack cheeses. They’re about the same thing, a washed curd cheese. It takes a little more than a gallon of milk to produce 1 pound of cheese. That way, I could make about 5 pounds of cheese per day.”

“What would we do with that much cheese?”

“I’m not sure, eat it?”

“You’d be so plugged up... I’m not going to argue with you about it, you’ll see.”

“If we have enough cheese on hand, I can always feed the milk to the hogs.”

“Where did you get that idea?”

“Slop refers to spilling a liquid, or feeding pigs, so why can’t it refer to feeding liquid to hogs? I seem to recall my father having a cream separator out in the well house and he sold the cream, gave us skim milk to drink and fed the leftover milk to the hogs. We moved to town when I was about eleven so I didn’t learn much about farming.”

“And, forty odd years later, you want to become a farmer?”

“It’s not so much that I want to, it’s more like I need to.”

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During the Great Depression, times were hard for everyone but less so for a farmer that used horses instead of a tractor and grew both their own food and the feed for the livestock. With nothing more than a garden rototiller, I wouldn’t be plowing up our five acres, thus reducing us to buying livestock feed. There was an ethanol plant close by.

Growth in America's ethanol industry has also been as a result of many farmer-owned organizations building ethanol plants. Since all of the new plants are dry mill facilities, the volume of distiller’s grains, a co-product of ethanol production, is also increasing.

When ethanol is produced from corn only the starch is used. A variety of highly valuable feed co-products are produced from the remaining protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals in dry mill corn processing.

One bushel of corn produces 18 pounds (2.72 gallons) of ethanol and approximately 17 pounds of distiller’s grains in various forms:

- Distillers Dried Solubles (DDS)
- Distillers Dried Grains (DDG)
- Condensed Distillers Solubles (CDS)

- Distillers Wet Grains (DWG)
- Distillers Dried Grains with Solubles (DDGS)

When I checked with them, I learned that the DDG would be much of what I/we needed to feed the cow, the sow and the chickens, when we got them. While it wouldn't be the sole feed source, it helped.

As we worked through the summer of '08, the economy went from bad to worse to an all-out disaster. People who had been afraid of using the 'R' word (recession), now used it freely; and some were hinting at the 'D' word (depression). Every chance we got, we went to Costco and Wally World, stocking up on the imported Jasmine rice and the 25# bags of bread flour. There didn't seem to be a bean shortage. Between the beans we bought and the beans we grew, we could probably create enough methane to set the atmosphere on fire.

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Let me change the topic to one of my least favorite people, Al Gore. Al was worried about global warming. However, consider this piece from Newsmax:

A San Francisco-based scientist says that current solar activity strongly indicates that the earth is on the verge of a new ice age.

"Sorry to ruin the fun, but an ice age cometh," warns Phil Chapman writing in The Australian. Chapman is a geophysicist and astronautically engineer who was the first Australian to become a NASA astronaut.

"The scariest photo I have seen... is at www.spaceweather.com, where you will find a real-time image of the sun from the Solar and Heliospheric Observatory [SOHO], located in deep space at the equilibrium point between solar and terrestrial gravity," Chapman wrote, adding ominously that "what is scary about the picture is that there is only one tiny sunspot."

"This is where SOHO comes in," he explained. "The sunspot number follows a cycle of somewhat variable length, averaging 11 years. The most recent minimum was in March last year. The new cycle, No. 24, was supposed to start soon after that, with a gradual build-up in sunspot numbers."

That, he writes did not happen. "The first sunspot appeared in January this year and lasted only two days. A tiny spot appeared last Monday but vanished within 24 hours. Another little spot appeared this Monday. Pray that there will be many more, and soon." Why? According to Chapman "there is a close correlation between variations in the sunspot cycle and earth's climate. The previous time a cycle was delayed like this was in the Dalton Minimum, an especially cold period that lasted several decades from 1790. Northern winters became ferocious: in particular, the rout of Napoleon's Grand Army during the retreat from Moscow in 1812 was at least partly due to the lack of sunspots."

Although the rapid temperature decline in 2007 coincided with the failure of cycle No. 24 to begin on schedule is not proof of a causal connection, Chapman warns that it is cause for concern.

“Disconcerting as it may be to true believers in global warming,” he explains, “the average temperature on earth has remained steady or slowly declined during the past decade, despite the continued increase in the atmospheric concentration of carbon dioxide, and now the global temperature is falling precipitously.”

“All four agencies that track earth's temperature [the Hadley Climate Research Unit in Britain, the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York, the Christy group at the University of Alabama, and Remote Sensing Systems Inc. in California] report that it cooled by about 0.7° C in 2007.” This, he says is “the fastest temperature change in the instrumental record and it puts us back where we were in 1930. If the temperature does not soon recover, we will have to conclude that global warming is over.”

Moreover, he says, there is also plenty of anecdotal evidence that 2007 was exceptionally cold, noting that it snowed in Baghdad for the first time in centuries, the winter in China was simply terrible and the extent of Antarctic sea ice in the austral winter was the greatest on record since James Cook discovered the place in 1770.

Chapman wrote that the global warming dogma should be put aside, “at least to begin contingency planning about what to do if we are moving into another little ice age, similar to the one that lasted from 1100 to 1850.”

How bad could a new little ice age be? “Much worse than the previous one and much more harmful than anything warming may do. There are many more people now, and we have become dependent on a few temperate agricultural areas, especially in the U.S. and Canada.” Global warming, he added, “would increase agricultural output, but global cooling will decrease it. Millions will starve if we do nothing to prepare for it [such as planning changes in agriculture to compensate], and millions more will die from cold-related diseases.”

And grim as that outlook is, Chapman predicts that there is also another possibility, remote but much more serious – the Greenland and Antarctic ice cores and other evidence show that for the past several million years, severe glaciation has almost always afflicted our planet and under normal conditions, most of North America and Europe are buried under about 1.5 km of ice.

This bitterly frigid climate is interrupted occasionally by brief warm interglacials, typically lasting less than 10,000 years.

The present interglacial period we have enjoyed throughout recorded human history, called the Holocene, began 11,000 years ago, so an ice age is overdue. And glaciation

can occur quickly: The required decline in global temperature is about 12° C and it can happen in 20 years.

His conclusions: “The next descent into an ice age is inevitable but may not happen for another 1,000 years. On the other hand, it must be noted that the cooling in 2007 was even faster than in typical glacial transitions. If it continued for 20 years, the temperature would be 14° C cooler in 2027.”

By then, he writes, “most of the advanced nations would have ceased to exist, vanishing under the ice, and the rest of the world would be faced with a catastrophe beyond imagining.”

“All those urging action to curb global warming need to take off the blinders and give some thought to what we should do if we are facing global cooling instead,” he writes. “It will be difficult for people to face the truth when their reputations, careers, government grants or hopes for social change depend on global warming, but the fate of civilization may be at stake.”

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To my thinking Al Gore is the Christmas goose and you know what it is full off, right? Back to the subject at hand, we processed everything in the garden and either ate it or put it up. On the days I wasn't helping with that, I was working on the hen house and chicken fence. Ruth bought chicks when they became available after I finished it up. I was more than grateful that the pole building and fenced in pig pen were north of the house because the prevailing wind was from the west. It didn't smell that bad going into the hog, but coming out, it would take your breath away.

After we were past garden season, in the days before the elections, I took to going to town and going door to door looking for used canning jars. There weren't a lot to be had, but some people were grateful for the space they gained by giving them away. Not many, mind you, but enough that it compensated for the embarrassment I felt asking in the first place. If the economy continued to crash, no doubt they'd turn to growing gardens and rue the day they gave the jars away.

The jars came in three sizes, jelly jars, pints and quarts. Most were standard mouth, but some were wide mouth. I sent off to Canning Pantry and got another case of regular lids and two of the wide mouth. The regular were \$89.90/720 and the wide mouths were \$79.99/432. I also got one case each of the plastic lids with contained 96 caps and had prices of \$32.99 and \$99.99 respectively, plus shipping, of course.

We stored the flour in Mylar bags with an oxygen absorber, put that in the plastic pail and after freezing them for a full week. I took several pails to the local elevator and had the Mylar bags filled with wheat, oats, corn or barley. I added oxygen absorbers, bay leafs where appropriate and vacuum sealed the bags then added a dab of silicone and put the lids on. It was just the right time of year to do that, new crops were just arriving

and as long as I didn't get in their way, they let me help myself then weighed the pails, charging accordingly.

I didn't have to go any further than a sugar beet processing plant to load up on beet sugar, by the pallet load, of course. The Big Valley has more food processors per square mile than most other parts of the US. Living in California had the pros and the cons. We also have a lot of cons locked up in prison, they're everywhere. Anyway, the pros were the availability of food even in these distressed times and the cons were too numerous to list. Perhaps the worse was the state's attitude concerning firearms. They had a banned list of long arms and all handguns not on the approved list were also banned.

I also sometimes took time off in the fall to hunt. I had a post '64 Winchester model 70 in .308, a Remington Express combo with long and short barrels and a Marlin 39A Golden Trigger. My handguns predated the existing laws and I had one of the Ruger auto-loading Mark IIs in .22LR, a good used Colt .45acp and Ruth's favorite, a Browning Hi-Power in 9mm.

Some years, I didn't get a tag in the drawing and hunted chuckar instead. That's about as hard of bird hunting you will find. I bought both 168gr HP and 165gr SPBT ammo for the .308 for over a buck a round. However, I'd been told that Black Hills was about the most accurate ammo you could get. I'd been cautious with our money and when I had a chance to get a full 500-round case of each, I'd jumped on the chance. I shot nothing but Speer God Dot in my pistols, except for practice when I used Speer FMJ Lawman. If I'd have purchased Federal 168gr match ammo, it would have cost the same as the Black Hills, so why bother?

Our son Ron lived in Ohio and our daughter Sarah and her husband Bill lived in Texas. For Christmas '08, they went together and bought me a rifle I'd wanted for years, a Springfield Armory M1A (story is now 'official'). Since they were splitting the cost, they got the loaded and a full box (25) of 20-round T-57 magazines. Sarah and Bill brought the Christmas present across the border. Bill said they asked him if he had any fruit and vegetables but didn't ask if he had any California illegal guns.

It beat the hell out of what I usually got: socks and/or a necktie and sometimes a shirt. They were splurging and got Ruth a handmade quilt for our bed. They arrived on December 23rd and left for home on December 26th. Our country was in trouble, especially considering the outcome of the November 4th election. Osama had his own appeal to particular Democrats and John McCain appealed to most Republicans although he was older than dirt. I'll come back to the election candidates and the outcome, later.

Anyway, with inflation being what it was, I could have never afforded the rifle. I suppose I'd wanted one from back in the mid to late '80s. I fiddle farted around until the PRK outlawed them; then legalized them to an extent. You had to have a muzzle brake and no bayonet lug, but you could own one. The bayonet lug is part of the flashhider and Fulton Armory would sell you a flashhider with a bayonet lug, unless you lived in California.

Bad Times – Chapter 2

Anyone who could afford one 500-round case of Black Hills could afford two cases of that Lithuanian surplus, I reasoned, and since I had 500-rounds each of the Black Hills loadings, I ordered 4 cases from Ammoman. Ruth laughed and said I needed to stop reading the stories on those websites. Nobody, she said, needed 5,000 rounds of ammo. I might end up like the guy down in the inland empire and get arrested.

I called Ron and told him what I needed. I'd buy the pliers and alignment tool if he'd get me the flashhider from Fulton and ship it to me. He said ok, but warned me that if the shipment was intercepted, he wouldn't drive to the PRK to deliver it, not with gas over \$4 a gallon and \$5 some places.

I also got the bayonet and sheath. However, the bayonet was a major disappointment, because the blade was too short. I'd much rather have bayonets with 16" blades. So, I scrounged around for a bayonet for the Garand rifle, M1905/M1942, and had it modified. Next, I spent precious time giving it a 'bit of an edge'. Anyone need a shave?

In the firearms department I was mostly cautious with the money, it wasn't exactly rolling in and things were beginning to get tight. I usually bought the .22LR by the brick and the .45acp by the box, mostly so Ruth wouldn't notice. Regardless, when you've wanted a rifle for as long as I did, I didn't say, *You shouldn't have*, or any other such nonsense. They had to settle for *Thank you very much*.

With only property taxes to pay on the house plus our utility bills, we were better off than most I suppose. The PRK was bankrupt however; they were just too shy to admit it. Arnold had a lot of great ideas but the Democratic Assembly wasn't interested. Could be they were put off by him smoking cigars or his accent. At least, he sold the Hummer. His missus was a member of the Kennedy clan, maybe that's why some called him a RINO.

In no time at all, we got a litter of 9 surviving pigs and the cow had her calf. The sow did extremely well on the DDG. The calf was a heifer and if we wanted to increase our herd, we could keep her and breed her. Considering how old our cow was, she'd probably only drop one calf and her milk supply was waning. The chickens grew so fast we had fryers in the blink of an eye. We ended up with too many eggs to eat and didn't want to freeze them. A mom and pop took them off our hands until we had all the chickens butchered and frozen.

I swear we didn't pay more than \$500 for our old 25ft³ freezer, but they were up to \$900 now, plus sales tax and delivery. We arranged to pick it up ourselves. Since we didn't have any place to put it, it ended up in the pole building. I figured the freezer was a must have because Ruth wanted to freeze several vegetables. Ruth let several of the plants go to seed and we ended up with double the seed we started with. For all appearances, it appeared we'd be eating fried chicken, gravy, mashed potatoes and a vegetable, almost all home grown. I didn't mind because home grown tastes better, even if it really doesn't.

The cow barely produced enough milk for the calf and we had to wait until the calf was weaned before we had milk and the ingredients for cheese. A small investment in a book on making cheese turned out to be a blessing. I like pepper cheese and half of the Jack was pepper Jack. The remainder went into Longhorn Colby. Once I got on a roll and was turning out the cheese, I realized that we couldn't eat that much cheese in a year. I made another trip to the mom and pop and gave them a sample of both cheeses. He said he'd take the pepper Jack, but he didn't sell much Colby. We began to eat a lot of macaroni and cheese using the elbow macaroni and shredded Colby. Ruth said, "I told you so!"

Anyway, to make a long story short, I had to call the Vet about the milk cow and he suggested we sell her for lean beef or have her butchered. He was certain we wouldn't have trouble getting tallow and we could get the cow made into ground sirloin and minute (cube) steaks. Buying that freezer was one of our better ideas because we wound up with 200 pounds of minute steaks and close to 500 pounds of ground sirloin. Sunday dinner was looking up, fried chicken or meat loaf.

Wait, I forgot the pigs. We sold four, kept three gilts and had two barrows butchered. I guess you can add ham, roast pork, pork chops, pork steak to Sunday dinner and slab bacon and sausage to the breakfast menu. Ruth wanted fresh pork hocks although I thought they should have been smoked and added to the beans. Was it worth growing our own dry beans? Well, yes and no; we had more beans but considering the amount of labor involved, I wasn't quite so sure. Had we planted more, I'll allow it might have been a good idea.

Our shopping trips to town were now far more austere. We bought coffee, bread flour, general purpose flour, more dried yeast, spices and rolled oats. She shopped from a list and read the Thursday paper, clipping coupons and buying sales items. Did I mention how good of a cook she is? Oops, she'll kill me.

I got a little carried away with one of my batches of pepper Jack. The Jack was fine, but the peppers were hot enough to make me check in the mirror to see if I blistered my mouth. According to my cheese book, cheddar is produced by a different process than Colby and Jack so I didn't try to make any. We'd only eat mild cheddar anyway so Ruth didn't object. It would have just meant having another type of cheese to eat.

When I finally got the chance, I took my new rifle to a local range to check the sighting and compare the ammo. The Lithuanian surplus fired ok and was under 2 MOA. The Black Hills HP match ran around ½ MOA and the SPBT about the same. Please allow me to explain something to you. When I was in the Army, we used the M16, a POS! You just couldn't keep it clean. Standard ammo load-out was 210-rounds. By the time you fired those 210-rounds, you had to open the sucker up and clean it. I shopped around and decided I really wanted a .30 caliber rifle and since my Winchester was a .308, I picked the M1A. I had my eye on the Super Match, but only Bill Gates could afford one. I'd have purchased any model I could afford, but that never happened. Now, the only

problem with the rifle was I couldn't take it out of the house because it wasn't California legal. It sure looked mean with the 16" bayonet.

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Was I a lean, mean fighting machine? Maybe I was when I was 30 years younger and in the Army. I didn't have a paunch, but I was way out of shape. Ruth suggested I start off easy and do a few exercises until my muscle tone began to improve. She said she'd jog with me because she could stand to lose 10-pounds. Probably more like 25, I knew better than suggest that. The Big Valley cools off during the winter, but doesn't get cold unless to drive up into the Sierra Nevada range.

Nobody should expect a man in his early 50s to be in the same condition as a 22 year old recruit fresh out of boot camp. The same could be said for a 50 year old woman, although, she may have been in better shape than I was. The other aspect of losing weight is pushing the plate away, rather than taking that second helping. One day she asked if she could go to the range with me so I got the .45, the 9mm and the M1A and off we went. Even though she hadn't shot for years, she really took to my rifle. She was also very good, for a 'beginner', on the Browning.

On the way home, she asked what the chances were she could have her own rifle. I offered the Marlin 39A, but she said that wasn't what she had in mind. Since I have so little in my rifle, about \$300 for the NM flashhider with the bayonet lug and the 16" bayonet, I told her that if she could find the money in our budget, we'd get her one and have Ron pick up the accessories. The main problem with trying to live on a fixed income is that prices rise faster than the COLA.

"Do you want what the kids got me; or, do you want the standard model?"

"What's the difference?"

"About \$150; it doesn't have the national match features they put on the loaded, but it's nearly identical."

"What else will I need?"

"The NM flashhider with the bayonet lug, a bayonet like the one I had made up and a box of magazines."

"Can you do it for \$2,000?"

"I can get awful damned close. I suppose you want to carry the Browning, too?"

"What about extra magazines for the pistol?"

"I have several military surplus 13 round magazines."

“Would I need anything else?”

“A BoB, in case you’re caught away from home; and, probably a Marine Corps fighting knife, the old model, not the new one that doubles as a bayonet.”

“I know a guy named BoB.”

“No dear, it means a Bug out Bag. You carry it everywhere you go so when you need it, you have it. Be sure to include some sneakers because you’ll likely be on foot.”

“Sam, I’ll call Ron because I wanted to talk to him anyway. I’ll ask him to get the magazines and the same flashhider he got you.”

“I’ll run to town and see if I can find you a rifle.”

The dealer didn’t have one in stock but promised he would have it before the waiting period expired. I said fine and bought it in my name. Once he added up the rifle, background check and sales tax it appeared I’d have to get into our rainy day fund to pay Ron for the extras.

“Ron said he’d get the stuff and we should just consider it to be an early birthday present for me. Where does that leave us?”

“I’ll be able to get the bayonet and the two grand will be all but gone. The bayonet is sort of a collector’s item and with the modification costs \$250.”

About a month later we took the new rifle to the range and sighted it in. After that, I installed the illegal flashhider with the lug and loaded all 25 of her magazines with the surplus ammo. The Black Hills ammo was for my Winchester when I went hunting. I decided to keep the Black Hills for my Winchester and use the surplus in my rifle as well. We still needed LBE and probably more surplus ammo.

That jasmine rice from Thailand that Costco sold was almost \$1/pound. More often than not, they were out of it and when they had it, you had a limit reflecting how much you’d previously purchased. Over the course of our stockpiling, we were buying one or two bags a month and they allowed us to buy two more bags when it finally came in. They were also limiting, or were out off of, pinto beans. So, we tried Smart & Final Iris and they had plenty. It was a crying shame that they only had 10 stores in the Fresno.

The simple truth is that I never thought of myself as either a prepper or survivalist. We just accumulated things we’d use anyway when the price was right. By having food on hand, for example, we could limit our trips to town, probably a 2-gallon affair at now, \$5 a gallon. In some California stores you see bulk pinto beans in the produce section. I saw the guy refilling the display one day and asked, “How big of a bag do they come in?”

“The bag is 100-pounds.”

“Can I get a full bag?”

“You’d have to talk to the manager, but I think so.”

The manager said that if I got a full bag, he’d cut the price 5% and went on to suggest that I watch for the beans being a loss leader, at which time I wouldn’t get the discount, but he wouldn’t limit me. He went on to say that the next time they ran a sale, he’d order two extra bags or more if I wanted. I told him two would be enough.

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The economy continued to slip and none of the actions of the Democrat in the White House seemed to make any difference. It took three dollars to buy one Euro. However, when the economy of the land of the brave and home of the free slips, it affects other places, like Europe. Places that export large amounts of goods to the US suddenly find the orders falling off because people don’t have money to spend on frivolity. The only one who benefits is OPEC. Would you believe ~\$150 a barrel?

The Great Depression was not a sudden total collapse. The stock market turned upward in early 1930, returning to early 1929 levels by April, though still almost 30 percent below the peak of September 1929. Together government and business actually spent more in the first half of 1930 than in the corresponding period of the previous year. But consumers, many of whom had suffered severe losses in the stock market the prior year, cut back their expenditures by ten percent, and a severe drought ravaged the agricultural heartland of the USA beginning in the northern summer of 1930.

In early 1930, credit was ample and available at low rates, but people were reluctant to add new debt by borrowing. By May 1930, auto sales had declined to below the levels of 1928. Prices in general began to decline, but wages held steady in 1930, then began to drop in 1931. Conditions were worst in farming areas where commodity prices plunged, and in mining and logging areas where unemployment was high and there were few other jobs. The decline in the American economy was the motor that pulled down most other countries at first and then internal weaknesses or strengths in each country made conditions worse or better. Frantic attempts to shore up the economies of individual nations through protectionist policies, like the 1930 US Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act and retaliatory tariffs in other countries, helped to strangle global trade. By late in 1930, a steady decline set in which reached bottom by March 1933.

I mention that because History has a way of repeating itself. It’s the same-old, same-old with a different label. The Great Depression was one of the factors that caused World War Two. The Treaty of Versailles was harsh and insulted the Germans. As an industrialized nation, the Depression hit them hard. And along comes some goose-stepping crackpot who promises them salvation. There are many views on this; but overall, Ger-

many the second most powerful industrial nation in the world, was beaten up by the Treaty.

There's an expression, *Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results*. Despite the multiplicity of economic theories, the government wasn't doing any better this time around. With their majority in both houses of Congress and holding the White House, the Democrats raised taxes on the rich. However, it only seemed to affect those in the middle class or lower. They passed the buck on the state of the economy, stating it was *Bush's fault*.

The good news was that the US continued to reduce the number of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan because Congress wouldn't fund the War on Terror anymore. Sadr was biding his time and when we were gone, a Civil War of untold proportions would erupt. Iran was busy supplying him with more arms and personnel. Israel was being attacked by Hezbollah on the north and by Hamas on the east and west. They, too, were using Iranian weapons, mostly smuggled to Syria who had tanks poised to strike the Golan Heights.

"Let's go to the range, Sam; I need practice."

"I hate to shoot up the expensive ammo Ruth."

"Use the surplus; we have enough to last forever."

"Maybe for a long time, but not forever, honey. We're between 9 and 10 thousand rounds."

"If you went shooting every day, and fired 300 rounds a day, it would last you 30 days."

"Do you realize what you just said? We only have a 30 day supply of .308 surplus ammo."

"Can we get more?"

"Do we have the money?"

"Not at the moment."

"Then, the answer is no. We'll cut our practice to 100-rounds apiece."

Ruth was only one year younger than I was and we both pretty much moved at the same pace. We'd been married 27 years, since about the time I got out of the Army. She did a good job raising Ron and Sarah. I made time for *guy* things with Ron and she made time for *girl* things with Sarah. However, I had taught both of our kids how to shoot, using the .22 rifle and the .308 Winchester. BTW, the rifle had a Leopold VX-III,

3.5-10×40mm scope installed, just about the right power range. I sure wasn't any Carlos Hathcock, even with the scope because I didn't practice enough.

"Sarah called."

"How are they doing?"

"Not so good, Bill got laid off and she's pregnant again. She said he's thinking about moving back to California."

"The job situation here isn't any better than it is there."

"I told her that. She said that they might load what they have into their travel trailer and move here. They could live in the trailer and he could look for odd jobs."

"Nobody should live in a trailer. The first big wind that comes along could destroy it. I suppose they could move into her old room."

"I thought of that but didn't want to say anything until I talked to you. It's a furnished apartment so they don't really have too many possessions."

"Call her back and extend an invitation for them to live here. If they can get good money out of the trailer home, they ought to sell it. We'll just slice the meat thinner."

"I'll do that. What are you working on in the yard?"

"I hesitate to say, Ruth; you'd probably call me crazy. Call it a storm shelter."

"We don't get many tornados so why would we need a storm shelter?"

"Ok then, an earthquake shelter. If we get a big temblor, it might take out the house and or the pole shed. I'm going to excavate a hole about 20' deep and put in a section of used 10' culvert."

"What is that going to cost?"

"It will cost the price of scrap steel; somewhere between \$350 and \$400 a ton. I have a line on a used 56' section."

"You're crazy."

"See, I knew you'd say that."

"I didn't say it for the reason you think, Sam. I said it because you're building a bomb shelter and won't admit it."

“What makes you say that?”

“You said ten feet deep. I read those stories too you know.”

Although there weren't as many people building bomb shelters as there were in the 1950s, most of the places that sold them had waiting lists. I had to do this as cheaply as possible and liked the culvert shelter built by Utah Shelter Systems. However, I didn't have 50 grand lying around and that was for the shelter and didn't include transportation and installation. It was a good buy, provided you had the money. They had sold over 500 shelters. And, I might do business with them for blast valves and other needs.

How big is a hole that's 14' wide, 20' deep and 60' long? That's the easy part, 16,800ft³ or 623yd³. How long would it take to dig it by hand? I won't live that long. My first task was to buy the used culvert, lugging out and getting free delivery. The culvert wasn't really old, they'd installed it but it had been too small and they dug it up and replaced it with a larger concrete culvert. There was no rust inside or out and the galvanized metal was still relatively shiny.

The following month, I had an excavator come out and remove the soil. He helped me get the culvert in the hole. Then, I had to take two months off while we rebuilt our cash. Once we'd done that, I bought the sheet metal and had the ends welded on, leaving a 36" round hole on one end and a 48" hole on the other, 4' up from the bottom.

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Meanwhile, back at the acreage so to speak, Bill and Sarah showed up before the excavation was done. Bill teased me about the culvert and I teased back, telling him that I wouldn't reserve a place for him if we needed to use it. Luckily, he got a part time job working construction, on one large building project in Fresno.

“What's that for, a bomb shelter?”

“As a matter of fact, yes.”

“Are we going to war with anyone? I thought they were bringing the troops home.”

“They are, Sarah. The economy is in the toilet, China is threatening to call in all of our debt and, and I don't like what I read in the news.”

“Why China and not Iran; Iran hates us.”

“Point taken; does it matter who doesn't like us? The list is very long and the more we do to try and help them, the more they dislike us.”

“That's because we're trying to export democracy, Dad.”

“It worked pretty well after WW II.”

“Only because of the Marshall Plan.”

“Japan too, had been badly damaged by the war. However, the American people and Congress were far less sympathetic towards the Japanese than they were to the Europeans. Japan was also not considered to have as great a strategic or economic importance to the United States. Thus no grand reconstruction plan was ever created, and the Japanese economic recovery before 1950 was slow. However, by 1952 growth had picked up, such that Japan continued, from 1952 to 1971 to grow in real GNP at an average annual rate of 9.6 percent. The US by contrast, grew at a rate of 2.9 percent from 1952 to 1991. During the four years of the Korean War, the Japanese economy saw a substantially larger infusion of cash than had any of the Marshall Plan nations.”

“Germany didn’t attack Pearl Harbor.”

“Ok Sarah, I give up; it’s not worth arguing over.”

“Do Mom and you live on only beans and rice?”

“Do you want a meatloaf? We have over 300-pounds of ground sirloin left. Would you rather have chicken or, perhaps, pork? Just tell your mother and she’ll get it out of the other freezer.”

“What other freezer?”

“The one in the pole shed.”

“You have two freezers and no backup generator? I think your priorities are wrong Dad. Get the backup power before you finish that stupid bomb shelter.”

“It was on my list, I’ll talk to your Mom about it. Thing is, Sarah, a generator would cost as much or more than the blast valves and AV-150 we’re saving for. Then, I’d have to put a large propane or diesel tank and fill it.”

I was considering the cost of a large generator putting out at least 100-amps. I hadn’t considered the alternative, something small enough to only run our refrigerator and freezers. We wouldn’t even have to supply electricity to all of them at the same time, so a 5kw probably would have been enough. That was affordable and Sarah was right; but, how often to parents listen to their kids? The answer isn’t, when they’re right, it’s more like, not often.

“Dad, this is Ron.”

“Hi Ron, how are you today?”

"I've been better."

"Do you have a problem?"

"The company is making cutbacks and I had very little seniority. I got laid off. I have some savings and was thinking about returning home. Could Mom and you put me up for a while in my old room?"

"Why not, Sarah and Bill are in her room because he got laid off. To top it off, she's expecting again."

"I hate to do it to you, you know that, right?"

"I know Ron, don't worry about it. When do you think you'll be here?"

"Not long, I can load everything in my old beater and be there in about 3-4 days."

"Then, we'll see you when you get here."

"Who was that honey?"

"Ron. He got laid off and is coming back here to live while he gets back on his feet."

"When will he be here?"

"He said 3-4 days."

"He might change his mind and drive straight though, you know. That's something he's done before. I'll plan on meatloaf for day after tomorrow."

"Sarah was all over my case."

"What about?"

Bad Times – Chapter 3

“About building the storm shelter before putting in backup power for the refrigerator and two freezers.”

“She has a point.”

“Ok, I’ll take what money we have set aside to finish the storm shelter and go shopping.”

I guess you could say that I got lucky. Costco had a 7kw PowerBoss gasoline fueled semi-portable generator on wheels for around \$900 including tax. I bought the generator, 2 cases of oil and 2 55-gallon drums in addition to 5 of those Blitz 5-gallon gas cans. It almost broke my heart when I had to shell out \$125 every time I refilled those cans. I spent around \$675, give or take, on gas; 110-gallons to fill the two drums plus another 25-gallons for the cans. It really ate into my AV-150 and blast valve money and totally wiped out the money I had set aside to buy the Package from Radmeters4U.

Even though I half expected a war, thus the shelter, there was no telling when it might happen. We’d already sweated through more than one blackout and they seemed to be getting longer. Sarah was right and when I came home with the generator; she asked if I’d taken what she said to heart.

“Yes, I did Sarah. With the blackouts and having as much frozen food as we do, I appreciate you pointing that out.”

“We have a little money left, is there anything we could do to help?”

“How little is a little?”

“We have about \$1,500 and are saving a little from each paycheck Bill gets.”

“If you really want to do something, get us the Package from Radmeters4U plus three extra dosimeters and some KIO₃ from Medical Corps.”

“Why do you want three extra?”

“It comes with three and we need one for everyone.”

“I thought I heard you tell Mom that Ron was coming here.”

“You did, but they’re \$50 each. I thought perhaps we wouldn’t need one for the baby.”

“We’ll just get four extra, to be safe. I’ll talk to Bill about it and we’ll get it done right away.”

As far as blast valve and the air pump/filter, I had to do a Gunny Highway. I got a container fabricated by a friend that would hold four filters, one furnace filter and three HEPA filters. The idea behind blast valves is that they slam shut when the pressure jumps and open when it's back to normal. I planned to a chance it and put in some used remote operated high pressure valves. The blast valves for the generator could be manually operated valves. It was almost planting time again by the time the shelter was done, April of 2010.

Do you remember that campaign promise Clinton made? She said something to the effect that if Iran nuked Israel, she'd wipe Iran off the map. Although the troops were all home, except from Korea and a few other small contingents, she maintained two carrier groups within striking range of Iran, one in the Med and the other in the Arabian Sea. All US Aircraft Carriers used to carry nuclear weapons, generally bombs. If they carry TLAM-Ns, I don't know about it. Maybe that's why Obama got the nomination and she ended up as Secretary of State. Hey, he picked up more votes.

By 2010, our economy hadn't really improved and prices were getting to be astronomical; \$6 plus gasoline, almost \$7 diesel fuel, groceries at the highest point in history as a percentage of disposable income, and so forth. Our influence as a nation was waning in the world. Iran was still stonewalling all six countries on the nuclear issue, North Korea was spoon feeding information and cooperation slower than molasses in January and Russia was strangely quiet. We'd put in the radar but not the ABMs.

Syrian tanks were still stationed on the Golan Heights, Hezbollah was still threatening Israel and the rocket attacks from the Gaza strip ran over 30 per day. Israel had, so far, shown tremendous restraint. However, we sold them two squadrons of the F-35As, plus one spare, for a total of 25 aircraft. You may recall that they used F-16s and F-15s when they struck Osiraq. Now, they had the best of both worlds, plus stealth, rolled up in one package. While the F-22 Raptor was the designated replacement for the F-15s, we didn't export them. All of these things had me on the edge of my seat and frightened, if not terrified.

There is probably one certainty in life, it's not if, it's just when and what, ergo, stuff happens. We had gone through the Cold War and although we managed not to have it turn hot, we'd been close, several times. It hadn't been limited to our side either; a Russian officer named Petrov had refused to launch a retaliatory strike when Russia's system showed a first strike by the US. There are literally dozens of such cases where war had been narrowly averted by one of the two sides. Two months after Petrov avoided war, NATO ran Able Archer and the Russians again thought they were being attacked. Petrov was rewarded by being demoted, forced into retirement and suffered a nervous breakdown.

I'd been a baby when the Cuban Missiles Crisis happened, but I do watch TV. Also, one of the PAW fiction writers had been stationed at Edwards AFB and had a tale to tell. Something about 12 B-47s in a shotgun area on EAFBs flight line, with two nukes each. We got out of the Great Depression when WW II happened. I thought it over and decid-

ed that the next war wouldn't do anything to help our economy because it was likely to be a Global Thermonuclear War where everyone loses; thus, my storm shelter.

"Can I help with that?"

"Thanks, Bill, I hadn't figured out to get the freezer into the shelter. I suppose we could empty it and slide it through the 4' hole."

Bill had been a big help finishing off the shelter, installing a black water tank with a sewage pump, connecting to the well and installing all of the homemade stuff we'd used to construct the shelter. When we need to move meat, we usually did it in volume, restocking the freezer in the house. Despite the price of gas, I made one trip to Sacramento and purchased bulk rice in 100-pound bags from a miller. My pickup was a $\frac{3}{4}$ ton so I bought that much Calrose rice, 15 bags. When the store had pinto beans as a loss leader, I always bought two more 100-pound bags. I could feed half of Fresno, for a while, on our stored food.

The last inventory we took, there were 24 6-gallon buckets of wheat, 12 6-gallon buckets of corn, 4 6-gallon buckets of barley and the same of oats. We stored dry yeast in both freezers and it seemed to last much longer than claimed. It was vacuum packed with the seal-a-meal to keep it dry.

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When Ron had arrived, he looked up a few of his friends and had a job in less than a day. He also had a few surprises when he arrived. He had acquired his own M1A, a Mossberg 590A1, the one with the ghost ring sights, and a Taurus PT1911B. He had what most people consider to be the minimum ammo for each firearm, 5,000 Lithuanian, 500 00 buck, 250 Brenneke slugs and 500 rounds of 230gr Gold Dot. In addition, he had a CD V-717 and a CD V-700 Geiger counter. Finally, he had 12 cases of MREs and 12 cases of the small bottles of drinking water.

"I did what I could, Dad. I built my gun collection one at a time and made sure I had the ammo and spare magazines before I moved on to the next gun. For the difference in price, I figured the Loaded was a better choice than the standard M1A. I used a bonus check to buy the stuff from Texas and knew a guy who could sell me actual current issue MREs."

"I'd say you did well, Ron. No scope?"

"What scope did you put on your M1A?"

"I didn't. However, my model 70 has a Leopold VX-III, 3.5-10x40mm scope."

"I can't believe the economy, Dad. They're laying off people left and right and unemployment is over 12%."

“It hit around 25% the last time around, but during Roosevelt’s first term it went to around 14% and zoomed again to 19% until WW II.”

“I hope it doesn’t take a war to end this one.”

“That makes two of us. The next one could be worse than you can imagine.”

“I’ve got a vivid imagination, Dad. You don’t believe that anyone would be dumb enough to start WW III, do you?”

“I hope not, but I do think it’s possible. The entire world is hurting from this slump or whatever they choose to call it. We have 2 carrier strike groups capable of hitting Iran with nuclear weapons if they nuke Israel. You have to remember what Hillary said during her campaign. All it would take is for the Israelis to retaliate against some attack and for Hezbollah and/or Syria to attack Israel. Then, if Iran fired a missile at Israel, they might launch on warning. I’m afraid that once it gets started, several countries, including us, might get involved.”

“How are we fixed on ammo?” (A logical question)

“You mother and I have 9,000-rounds of surplus and 1,000 rounds of Black Hills for our three rifles that use .308 NATO. I have more than enough for the other guns as well. We have several tons of food stored and our supply continues to grow every time somebody has a sale or I get a wild hair and buy in bulk.”

“So how much food do you actually have?”

“Literally a ton of rice, 1,500 pounds of pinto beans, wheat, corn, oats and barley. Around 150 cans of Folgers, homemade cheese in the freezer although the Jack cheese tends to become crumbly. We have a couple of cases of tea bags and all the home canned foods. Ron, I think we could probably get by for 2-3 years without going grocery shopping, if necessary.”

“I see you’ve taken to growing livestock.”

“Beef, pork and chickens only; we still get turkey from the grocery store when it’s on sale and stock up. They mostly run sales around Thanksgiving and Christmas. Some things, like ring bologna and so forth we buy up to the limit when it’s on sale. That’s why we have 50ft³ of freezer storage and I put in a small backup generator.”

“How many chickens do you have?”

“We buy them one-hundred at a time and generally buy twice a year. We keep some laying hens, but never buy roosters. We could change that on short notice, however.”

“I think I need to tie up a few loose ends. I’ll spend a portion of my paycheck each week to do that. How much would you and mom like for rent?”

“You might contribute a little when we go to the grocery store, otherwise, nothing.”

“Is that right? I like to pay my own way.”

“You will be. After you tie up those loose ends, you may want to invest in a farm tank and fill it with gas because it’s a few cents cheaper in bulk.”

“I hate to burst your bubble, but bulk gas is the same price or higher than at the station. I checked it out and it’s sometimes as much as a nickel a gallon higher. It would be smarter to get a tank and then buy the gas and stabilize it a little at a time.”

“I have 135-gallons stabilized.”

“What did you use, Stabil?”

“PRI-G; I bought 4-gallons for \$85 a gallon plus shipping.”

“A lifetime supply?”

“I suppose so.”

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Since we had more mouths to feed, the garden this year was larger. With Bill and Ron’s help, we added a cold cellar to the acreage. We left the floor dirt and laid concrete block to form the walls. Bill did the block and was good at it. It could double as a storm shelter but that wasn’t its purpose. We wanted it solely to store things like the potatoes and other garden produce. With more people here, we also took time to add more bunks to the bomb shelter, four to be exact. It would now sleep 10 people and we only number 6 including their first child, Cheryl.

Ideally, the root cellar/cold cellar would have been just a little colder, it was 63°. If a person computes the average temperature of the area, that’s the temperature underground. Potatoes should be stored around 40°, not 63° and in high humidity. Every day we could store food longer was worth the work.

Let me tell what Ron did with what he had left with his paychecks. First, he bought gas, but he and Bill car pooled, cutting the cost almost in half. He bought a good used .22 rifle and 20 bricks of ammo. Then he went scrounging until he found an unused farm with an empty farm tank. He asked several neighbors who finally put him in touch with the owner who sold him the tank because he had the land up for sale.

Next, Bill and he cleaned the tank and began adding 50-gallons of gas a week to the tank. He said it made more sense to add the 9.25ml of PRI-G when they filled the cans so when they brought it home, it was ready to go. That went on for a good part of the summer, 10 weeks, to be exact because it was a 500-gallon tank.

Unemployment went up another 1% during July and 1.5% in August. On the other side of the pond, the UK and most of Europe slipped further into the slump. Then, Iran tested a missile that had a range of around 1,500-miles. Keep in mind that the distance from Tehran to Tel Aviv is 988 miles. You know that supposed nuclear facility that Syria built and Israel bombed? They were far less out in the open when they rebuilt it, but the same country helped them, North Korea. Apparently, Israel couldn't prove it was a nuclear facility despite the reputation of Mossad, Shin Bet (Shabak) and Aman.

August 2001, Mossad warned the US of the presence of as many as 200 terrorists in the US who intended to make a strike. The Israeli intelligence agency cautioned that it had picked up indications of a *large-scale target* in the United States and that Americans would be *very vulnerable*.

Do you know what broke the back of the CIA? Two things: complications of the Vietnam War; and, abuses of authority from the '70s to the '90s. But we've all seen the movie, so we know the quote: *Central Intelligence Agency... Now, there's a contradiction in terms.*

All we could do now was sit back and watch; what was going to happen, whatever it might be, was well beyond our control. For example, the only way a person could get surplus ammo in the PRK was to have it hand delivered by a friend or a relative. The reason for that was the law California passed two years before requiring all ammo to have a serial number.

At age 54, I knew that I might live to experience the next *Big One* because the USGS said it would happen during the next 28 years. For longer than I'd been alive, we'd lived under the threat of nuclear annihilation. Plus there was the rare tornado we sometimes got in the Big Valley. The strongest tornado to ever strike Fresno County was on March 22, 1962 and was rated at F2. Personally, I thought flash flooding from a thunderstorm was a greater risk than a tornado.

You have to ask yourself, *what are the odds of that happening?* That clearly applies to anything, Mt. St. Helens, Yellowstone, Long Valley caldera, a tornado, an earthquake or even a manmade disaster. If you watch TV like I do, you know that the most common odds they quote are 20,000:1. I really don't know why that is, but those are the odds. If one assumes the Cold War began on August 29, 1949 (the day Russia exploded their first nuke) and ended on November 9, 1989 (the day the Berlin Wall fell), that's roughly 14,702 days. Obviously if the Cold War hadn't ended, we'd have hit 20,000. I calculated and the Cold War official ended 21 years before or roughly 7,670 days before now. Add it up, $14,702 + 7,670 = 22,372$. And, we're reducing nukes, not eliminating them.

According to the new earthquake forecast, California has a 99.7% chance of having a magnitude 6.7 or larger earthquake during the next 30 years. The likelihood of an even more powerful quake of magnitude 7.5 or greater in the next 30 years is 46%. Such a quake is more likely to occur in the southern half of the state (37% chance in 30 years) than in the northern half (15% chance in 30 years). Gee, I wonder where they drew the line dividing the north and the south. See [scec dot org slash ucerf slash](http://scec.org/ucrf).

The thing that we all kept in mind was that sooner or later, something would happen, we just didn't know what. I also took note of the fact that despite buying me a very expensive rifle, neither Bill nor Sarah had one single gun. It would only take one more rifle because one of them could use my model 70. For the sake of limiting the kinds of ammo used, Bill and I went looking for a .308 NATO chambered rifle. While I could have saddled one of them with my shotgun, I wanted to keep it at hand.

"Help you?"

"We're looking for a good used .308 NATO."

"Bolt action or semi-auto?"

"Probably a bolt action unless you have a good semi-auto."

"The only semi-auto I have at the moment is a Springfield M1A."

"California legal?"

"Couldn't sell it otherwise."

"Mind if we check it out? Do you have a bore light?"

"Here."

"Bore's good and very little wear. I'd say at least 95% of the original finish, Bill."

"What are you asking?"

"\$1,200 plus tax and background check. I'll give you a full one year warranty on top of Springfield's warranty. The total would be \$1,324, even."

"Which model is it?"

"Loaded."

"Any surplus?"

"You've got to be kidding."

“I was serious and I won’t tell if you don’t.”

“Can’t help you, but I may know somebody who can. Do you want the rifle?”

“Get me the 4473.”

“Look, while you’re filling the paperwork out, I can make a call. How many rounds do you want?”

“Five thousand or any portion thereof.”

“I can’t get involved but what happens in the next parking lot isn’t any of my business. Let me make the call. Last I heard he wanted \$575 for a case of 1,000.”

“Just a thought; if he has any extra magazines he might want to bring those along.”

“Anything else before I call?”

“If he had a National Match flashhider with a bayonet lug, I might be interested.”

It took about 45 minutes in the gun store then the guy pointed to a red pickup in the next parking lot. “Are you the ammoman?”

“No, he’s in New Jersey, but I have everything he has except quantities. I have the flashhider for \$75, magazines at \$400 per box of 25 and surplus at \$575 per case of 1,000. If you took it all, I’d need \$3,350 in cash.”

“I need two flashhidiers with the bayonet lug. And I’ll have to run to the bank.”

“I can wait. Your new total is \$3,425.”

“Thirty minutes ok?”

“See you then.”

It was only a few blocks to the bank and I withdrew only what I needed. There wasn’t any aspect of this transaction that was legal, but I was starting not to care. I could pick up the rifle in 15 days and would be ready to install the flashhider the minute I got it home. I also got two more bayonets. So long as the hole for the flashhider is the right size the bayonet didn’t need to be modified, however, that would have been too easy.

“I think I’ll let Sarah shoot the model 70, she’s familiar with it. I don’t have any more to spend, or I would have gotten you each a handgun.”

“I have enough for those.”

“That’s the problem. First, you have to take a test. Then, you buy the gun; next you wait 15 days to pick it and you can only buy one handgun in 30 days.”

“What would you recommend?”

“A good full size .45acp Colt.

“Feel like buying me one of the Colts? I’m sure Sarah would like one.”

“She actually prefers the 9mm Browning, but it will run you about double. I have plenty of the surplus 13 round military magazines, though.”

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Between Bill and I we equipped him and Sarah with two used M1As, a 590A1, two pistols, a .45 and a 9mm, plus a used .22 rifle. Hey, plans changed, we decided to keep the model 70 as a sniper rifle. It took a while, especially since the economy continued to falter, but a few people who owned guns they had inherited or whatever sold them off. Thus nine months later, we were well equipped with firearms. Moreover, we had increased our food supply, having resorted to buying a third 25ft³ freezer, used this time. Not knowing what the disaster would turn out to be, we couldn’t afford not preparing.

Getting ammo was more difficult, but Reno was in the same location it had been for years and the agricultural inspectors rarely asked if you had any illegal ammo. During the first Great Depression, California used the agricultural inspectors to keep the migrants out, according to the movie *The Grapes of Wrath*. About the only migrants we had these days came across the border; no semi-intelligent American wanted to move to a state with gun laws like California’s. I should note that all 5 of the M1As, new or used, now sported a new, illegal, flashhider with a bayonet lug and a M42 16” bayonet. In addition to 5,000-rounds of surplus per rifle, each had a full box of the 20-round magazines, all T-57s.

We’d added another boneless beef carcass and had it made into minute steaks and ground sirloin. We replaced but didn’t increase our supplies of several food items, like coffee. I had never figured that our two kids would end up living back at home; but it probably bothered them more than Ruth and me. Sarah was about 5 months along in her pregnancy and Ron was dating a gal he’d met in Fresno. While it may not seem likely to most people, we were actually accumulating a small amount of money because many duplicate expenses had been eliminated.

I said that Ruth and I had begun an exercise program to peel off a little weight. I also pointed out that involved pushing the plate away sooner. It worked, she lost those 10 (25) pounds and I lost almost 20. The better news was running had increased our endurance and using a set of weights had restored my muscle tone. In much of the PAW fiction I read, and on the forums, the advice was always, *get in shape and stay that way*.

I'd worn a baseball cap for years; when I turned farmer I gone for the straw, western hat. I'd also taken to wearing a western style boot with a low heel. I found jeans to be the most durable trouser and blue work shirts to be the cheapest shirt. In fact, wearing jeans had become everyone's daily wear except for Sarah because she was in maternity wear.

We sent our radiation equipment back to Texas and had it recalibrated. Also, we kept the farm tank topped off with stabilized \$7 gas. Plus, I exercised my 7kw generator about once every three months. I went to several news sources every morning on the internet, trying perhaps, to anticipate what disaster was going to befall us. Early reports of a NEO were frightening until they determined that it would pass outside the orbit of our Moon.

The debates over global warming versus a new ice age were becoming heated as more and more scientists moved from the global warming assertion to the assertion that it was just the lead event to another ice age. Old Faithful took a day off, concerning some, but resumed the next day. What else? The dome in Mt. St. Helens had continued to grow but the growth rate was unchanged. The tornado belt was hit by several twisters, but no more than average. An Atlantic storm was taking shape off the coast of Africa and the National Hurricane Center said it was too early to predict what would happen. It was, for all practical purposes, just another day in paradise, and we were all another year older.

We didn't have time to worry about it; we had a garden to plant. I let the younger men do the hard work, rototilling while Ruth and I sorted through our seeds and decided what to plant. We'd run short on onions this past year and decided to plant another row of those. We made room by reducing our watermelon crop. We also added room for four more rows to the garden and decided to try growing navy beans. According to what I'd read, navy beans could yield up to 40cw (2 tons) per acre. We now had 4 rows each of four kinds of beans and still had to buy some. We talked about expanding the garden further; but decided to put it off for a year.

By keeping the heifers and gilts, we actually produced enough beef and pork to sell some. The market price was so depressed, it almost wasn't worth it. We'd increased our chicken flock, nominally, from buying 100 twice a year to 150 twice a year. We were picking up some extra pocket money selling eggs, milk and cheese. Not unlike farmers during the 1930s, we didn't get paid a lot for what we produced. Like the farmer's during the 1930s, a majority of the food we consumed was produced right here on our acreage.

Bad Times – Chapter 4

It was difficult to recover more than your investment raising livestock, from one viewpoint. The other viewpoint was quick to point out that the meat you raised and didn't sell was essentially free even though you broke even on the meat you sold. That was because you spread all of the costs over the animals sold. That was my theory, at least.

...Hezbollah crossed the border into northern Israel at the same time Hamas made a coordinated attack from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Israeli forces are on full alert and moving to block the three incursions. Wait... this just in, Syria has attacked the Golan Heights using the tanks we reported on earlier broadcasts. So far, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iraq haven't announced that they plan to participate in the war.

The attacks began last night, just after midnight local Israeli time. It is unknown at this time whether Iran will join the warring forces. It is well known that the President has warned Iran against attacking Israel with nuclear weapons. Absent the IAEA verification, it is unknown whether Iran succeeded in developing nuclear weapons. Sources suspect that the last nuclear weapon test attributed to Pakistan was actually an Iranian produced weapon. Please stay tuned for breaking news.

"What was that about Dad?"

"Just the usual, several of its enemies attacked Israel again. According to Sheppard Smith, we have one carrier strike group in the Med, one in the Persian Gulf and one in the Arabian Sea. Each of the three has a combination of Hornets and Super Hornets. The last ship deployed has some of those new F-35Cs, too."

"When did they start flying the F-35s?"

"The Air Force has had them for a while and the Marine Corps have about a Squadron of the B model. The Navy has only had the C model for several months. They won't be fully deployed for about ten years. It makes me wonder about something."

"What?"

"They retired the Nighthawk back in early 2008. However, the planes ended up at Groom Lake, where indications are they've been stored and maintained. I was wondering how likely it was they might bring them back and use them in the Middle East."

"Dad, I can't see why, we have 20 B-2s and a lot of those Raptors that can carry two bombs each. Add to that the F-35s you just mentioned and we wouldn't need to bring back the F-117."

"You know that they're still using the U-2, don't you? Plus, according to Global Security, the Air Force has a total of 6 Blackbirds. I'm not sure they'd need them with the satellites we have, but they have them if they need them."

“It may take 24 hours before a satellite is in proper orbit to photograph a particular target: far longer than the time requirements of a reconnaissance plane. Spy planes can provide the most current intelligence information and collect it when lighting conditions are optimum. The fly-over orbit of spy satellites may also be predicted and can allow the enemy to hide assets when they know the satellite is above: a drawback spy planes do not suffer. These factors have led many to doubt that the United States military has abandoned the concept of spy planes to complement reconnaissance satellites.”

“Twenty-four hours? That could be a lifetime in a fast breaking situation.”

“Some of the aircrafts are A-12s, but most of them are SR-71As. What irks me is that we have the ABM radar installed but are still in negotiations with Russia over basing those ABMs.”

“Do you think they’ll get involved?”

“Why should they Ron? They can sit on their butts and watch. I’d say that they’d only get involved against anyone dumb enough to launch on them. They know we could wipe them off the face of the planet, if they attacked us. I’d say that the country we’ve long suspected of being willing to attack us, China, would be a more likely candidate. The difference with the Chinese is that their country is huge, as is their population. Even if they lost 5-600 million citizens, they’d have more than that left.”

As we watched the news over the next few days, Israel was getting their butt kicked. However, unlike the 2006 war, a change in tactics turned the tide and they gradually began to overcome Hezbollah and Hamas. They had stopped Syria cold in their tracks on the Golan Heights. The biggest problem for Israel continued to be the missiles supplied to the other combatants by Iran. The missiles proved to be very effective against Israeli tanks, just like in 2006 Lebanon War.

Israel’s Defense Minister warned Iran that, *should you continue to supply rockets to our enemies, we will have no choice except to attack you and cut the head off the snake.*

Less than three hours after the statement, Iran launched 6 missiles against Israel. Israel intercepted the missiles with their ABMs and experienced no strikes. However, the game was notched up one level and Israel launched 24 F-35s, each carrying a single nuclear weapon. Iran had 12 nuclear sites and several industrial cities that they intended to eliminate, once and for all.

When Israel dropped the bombs, Saudi Arabia launched the three nuclear tipped missile they didn’t have and Pakistan, Iran’s partner, launched against Israel. When India saw Pakistan launching missiles, they launched on warning even though the missiles would later prove to have been aimed in a different direction. Two of India’s missiles had faulty guidance systems and they ended up pointed at China, or so they claimed. When the

missiles started flying, Obama activated the EAS, just in case. So, now you know for certain who won; God help us!

My fellow Americans...

At this time, our country is not under attack. Allow me to repeat, not under attack. We have placed all Naval and Air Force assets on high alert and have initiated actions to protect Army assets. NORAD staff has been moved from Anderson Air Force Base back into our Operations Center at Cheyenne Mountain.

You are urged to take such steps as you deem necessary to protect yourself and family. I have cautioned all participants in the conflicts against attacking this country. To prevent a run on grocery stores and service stations, I am declaring a nation emergency and implementing martial law until the conflict is resolved. We expect the national emergency will be declared over within days.

Thank you and good night.

“Are we ok on everything or are there steps we should take to prepare?”

“We’d better lock the livestock in the pole barn and use that hay to provide shelter against radiation, just in case.”

“What if it gets wet?”

“We’re going to use those two rolls of plastic I bought to cover it. I read that in some story in one of the websites.”

“Won’t they starve unless we can get out to feed them?”

“We’ll feed them just before we go into the shelter, should it come to that, and 49 hours later, the fallout will only be 1% of what it started out at. Besides taking care of the livestock, we should get that CD V-717 set up.”

“If we’re coming out to feed them, we’d better build some sort of offset rather than make the wall of hay solid.”

“I see what you mean. Ok, we’ll do that. Is Bill home yet?”

“He’s working overtime. However, in light of Obama’s announcement, he should be here soon. He said he had a ride home.”

“Tell your sister to go after him.”

“Ok.”

By the time Bill and Sarah were home, we had $\frac{2}{3}$ of the hay stacked and the offset created. Ruth had pulled the wire for the survey meter and had emptied the refrigerator into the smaller refrigerator in the shelter. The worst that could happen was we'd have to move some of the hay and put the things back in the refrigerator. We hadn't practiced what we were going to do, but it went smoothly. Basically we didn't have time to stand around and argue about it. Long before another announcement came over the EAS, we were ready.

My fellow Americans,

At this time, I am declaring an Air Defense Emergency. We have detected missiles in the air headed towards the United States. NORAD has informed me that missiles have been launched from two submarines and from mainland China. Even as I speak, the first missiles should begin arriving on our west coast. Please take cover immediately. Excuse me, I have to go.

"Is it time?"

"If they intend to attack Fresno, it probably is. I don't think they will, however. You can count on them hitting San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco, though. I suppose we should go ahead and get in the shelter."

"Do you think he'll get out of Washington?"

"What makes you think the broadcast was from Washington? He could have been anywhere and if they put up the right background, nobody would know. I read somewhere that there are several Presidential shelters."

"Like the Greenbrier?"

"Well... sort of. That was the Congressional bunker. You don't honestly think that there wasn't a replacement for it, do you?"

"You sound like you believe in conspiracies."

"I might, but I promise not to tell you which ones I think have more merit than others."

"UFOs?"

"Kennedy assassination?"

"Which one?"

"Either; take your pick. Jack Ruby? Martin Luther King?"

"I said I wouldn't tell. Maybe one of the ones you listed and that's only a maybe."

“Two weeks down in this hole in the ground?”

“That depends. Since Sarah is pregnant, she’ll be down here longer than the rest of us. Ruth, considering our age, I think that you and I ought to make all the trips outside until we’re sure it’s safe.”

“Didn’t you say that was around one-tenth of a Rad?”

“Yes, I did. That’s the level to avoid radioactive poisoning. However, who knows what the level is to avoid cancer or even sterility? I read something by Cresson Kearney that said under wartime conditions, our most immediate concern was acute radiation poisoning. The fallout continues to decay. A compound like Cesium has a half-life of something like 30 years. Mostly you see that from reactor accidents like Three Mile Island or Chernobyl.”

“So, Sam, do we have everything we need?”

“I think so. There enough gas for the generator, plenty of food and water, radiation detection equipment, our old TV and some DVDs, weapons and spare clothes. It seems like we have everything.”

“Where is the ham radio, in one of the cabinets?”

“I didn’t get one. The thought never occurred to me.”

“Do you have any radios?”

“I have a wind up AM/FM with weather channels here in the shelter. My old CB is in the basement if we can find the antenna.”

“Portable?”

“I used to have it in my pickup. The mounts are still there and I’m pretty sure the antenna and radio are downstairs.”

“How did you overlook getting a ham radio?”

“They’re expensive and with one thing then another, it’s more like I didn’t get around to it than didn’t think about it. I was looking at a Kenwood TS-2000 base station. I thought I’d add a vertical antennal like the MFJ-1798 mounted on a mast. It would have been a good setup, if I’d have done it.”

“I have a CB in my pickup Dad.”

“Sam I have one too, maybe we can get by until we can find an amateur radio.”

“Bring them down here, NOW! I’m sorry fellas; there were more things to do than money to do them.”

“Don’t worry about it, we can work around it. We might not get exactly the model you want, but there must be a lot of ham radios in the Fresno area.”

“I’ll go for salvaging abandoned property, but I won’t take a radio away from anyone.”

“Any estimates on how long we’ll be down here?”

“Not at the moment. I can tell you almost to the minute once the fallout peaks. I have a spreadsheet you plug in the peak radiation level and it calculates the exact radiation at specific intervals. You heard what I told Ruth, I’m sure. Considering you’re all young, I intend to insist that you don’t leave until we’re down to 50mR. Ruth and I can feed the livestock and won’t get that much exposure.”

“You were expecting this to happen, weren’t you?”

“We were past due. Ever since China started their buildup, it seemed the most likely. Do you read Chinese Defense Today? No? I check it out about once a week. They’ve had a crash program underway for several years. While they haven’t caught the US, they’re far larger than many other countries in terms of military power. They have 4th generation fighters, a small fleet of submarines, a small surface navy and a good sized missile force.”

There was one thing I hadn’t told anyone, including Ruth. Since the beginning, I’d been keeping notes. I thought that someday I’d write a book on our experiences of the Second Great Depression. It might not sell, but it would take me a while to turn my notes into a manuscript. Plenty of time, I thought, for a market to be created. With this attack, there was no more reason to keep taking notes. However, it had become habit and I just kept going.

Without the ham radio that I never bought, we were cut off from the country and the world. My portable wouldn’t pick up a signal inside a metal pipe buried 10’ underground. We started watching the radiation and it got up to 265R. At 49 hours, that was down to 2.65R/hr and Ruth and I went out and feed the livestock. We each picked up about 2R. We left our radiation covered clothing outside the shelter next to the generator and went back in for another two days. At 4 days, the level was around 1.4R/hr and we picked up an additional exposure of roughly 1R.

The radiation level fell below 1R/hr sometime on the 6th day and on the sixth day, we only added about ½R. However, it took 21 days for the radiation to fall below 104mR/h. By this time, Bill and Ron were chomping at the bit to go out. I was quick to point out that Ron didn’t have any kids that he knew of and surely Bill and Sarah would want more. Since we couldn’t be certain what the fallout would do to their reproductive abili-

ties. I told them if they could put up with staying 50 days, the level would be down to about 50mR and falling; and, by 100 days 26.5mR and still falling.

“Fifty days?”

“Do you have somewhere you need to go?”

“It’s just that this shelter isn’t all that big and I feel so closed in.”

“You are closed in and thank God you are. Despite the economy, I built this little hideaway on the cheap. At the time, it seemed unlikely we’d need it for its intended purpose of being a bomb shelter. And yes, I missed a few things, like the ham radio. Nevertheless, we’re alive and not that uncomfortable. We have power, food, water and a bunk to lay on when we’re tired. Speaking of which, it’s time to change the oil in the generator again.”

“I’ll do it dad.”

“Thanks Ron. Everyone turn on their flashlight.”

The generator would fit in the pipe that was the entrance to the shelter. We could easily take it topside and run an extension cord to the freezer in the shelter rather than the other way around. We were in better shape than probably 95% of the country with about 4 years of staples and 75ft³ of mostly meat. We were also armed to the teeth although it hadn’t been part of my initial plans. It was like sitting down with a 20-pound bowl of salted peanuts, once I’d started...

I’ll be candid here, what with the economy in a continuing slump and people unable to afford much extra food, I expected trouble. Three men and two women plus one child aren’t exactly what I’d call a fighting force. On the other hand, it was only a small acreage and a person could easily hit any spot on it with the M1A rifle, if necessary. The slump would turn into a far worse situation because the grocery stores used just in time inventory practices and demand had been down, hence the shelves weren’t as full as they would ordinarily be.

As an example, Ruth and I had to diet to get the weight off. For many people, dieting hadn’t been necessary; they’d sort of starved it off. Most of the people ate fewer calories than they had in the past and things like candy and soda represented expensive calories they didn’t spend money on.

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Obama was in a bunker when the attack came and when the radiation levels permitted, he moved to another bunker. One of the things not generally known about the Congressional retreat at the Greenbrier was that it was still very functional. Not only had everything been left in place, the contents of the shelter not on display to the public, the food

and so forth, was maintained in a current condition. I got that from a ham in West Virginia. They had managed to round up a quorum of both houses of Congress and get them inside of the Greenbrier before life outside the shelter became untenable.

Sometimes, it was claimed, it was impossible to determine who was President, Obama or Joe Biden.

“Status?”

“Mr. President, we’re in tough shape. They hit all of our largest 100 cities with one weapon and sometimes more. Los Angeles alone, took three hits. In addition, they hit each of our largest military bases in terms of population. Under the John Warner Defense Appropriations Act, you can...”

“I know what I can do. Just about anything I want after I declare a National Emergency.”

“Yes, sir, that’s correct. I never thought I lived to see the day when Posse Comitatus could be suspended.”

“I’m signing this Declaration that the country is in a state of national emergency and will remain so until I say otherwise. Go do your thing General.”

“Yes, sir.”

◦

The Minnesota Starvation Experiment was conducted during the mid-40s. According to Wiki, the results were:

The full report of results from the Minnesota Starvation Experiment was published in 1950 in a two-volume, 1,385 page text entitled *The Biology of Human Starvation* (University of Minneapolis Press). The fifty chapters of this treatise contain an extensive analysis of the physiological and psychological data collected during the study together with a comprehensive literature review.

Among the many conclusions from the study was the confirmation that prolonged semi-starvation produces significant increases in depression, hysteria and hypochondriasis as measured using the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), a standardized test administered during the experimental period. Indeed, most of the subjects experienced periods of severe emotional distress and depression. There were extreme reactions to the psychological effects during the experiment including self-mutilation (one subject amputated three fingers of his hand with an axe, though the subject was unsure if he had done so intentionally or accidentally). Participants exhibited a preoccupation with food, both during the starvation period and the rehabilitation phase.

Sexual interest was drastically reduced and the volunteers showed signs of social withdrawal and isolation. The participants reported a decline in concentration, comprehen-

sion and judgment capabilities, although the standardized tests administered showed no actual signs of diminished capacity. There were marked declines in physiological processes indicative of decreases in each subject's basal metabolic rate (the energy required by the body in a state of rest) and reflected in reduced body temperature, respiration and heart rate. Some of the subjects exhibited edema (swelling) in the extremities; presumably due to the massive quantities of water the participants consumed attempting to fill their stomachs during the starvation period.

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The point is that hungry people are highly unpredictable. For those that survived the apparent peak radiation level of 265R, the grocery stores would be out of food quickly. At that point, they'd probably regained some strength and weight and would go looking for more to eat, no doubt carrying some sort of weapon in case they needed to use force. I'd be less than honest if I didn't admit that that concerned me.

"Are we going to town and see about replacing the gasoline?"

"We aren't going into Fresno for any reason whatsoever. If we can find an out of the way station, I'd be willing to consider that."

"Where would you find an out of the way station with a lot of gas?"

"The first place that comes to mind is Kettleman City, at the truck stop. With as many stations as they have there, I'd think we could find up to 100,000-gallons of gasoline. They'd probably have more than that when it came to diesel fuel."

"Where is Kettleman City?" Bill asked.

"Down highway 41, at the junction with I-5."

"How far?"

"Maybe 20, 25 miles."

"What would the chances be of finding a fuel delivery truck?"

"Pretty good, actually. That's provided you don't insist on any particular brand."

"Are you talking about just going down there and taking it?"

"These are bad times, boys. What choice do we have if we're going to preserve the frozen goods?"

"You should have bought a larger generator."

“Without Sarah saying something, I wouldn’t even have the one I have. Ideally, we’d need something that could provide the number of amps our breaker panel can handle, 200 amps.”

The solution to the problem would either be a Kohler 50REOZJB or a Cummins DCGB. Each was capable of producing 120/240 and 200/100 amps of prime power. Both were diesel fueled and within reason, used about the same amount of fuel; although the Kohler used less. The problem would be finding one. It occurred to me that having power for the entire acreage would make it a beacon to others. Still, it got hot in Fresno during the summer.

“Where did you find it?”

“Don’t ask.”

“Is it new?”

“It appears to only have been run to recharge the battery. This is the one you wanted right, Kohler 50REOZJB?”

“Yes, it will do nicely and uses less diesel. Is the tank full?”

“Nearly. It should run long enough for us to make a trip looking for gasoline and diesel. Let’s get it installed and connected to the ATS. Then we can fire it up. Later, we’ll take your 7kw generator with us in case we need to pump fuel at Kettleman City.”

“Take your rifles and shotguns; you never know what, or who, you might run into.”

It took three hours to get the generator set in place, the ATS installed and hooked up and the generator started. For the first time since this all began, we had full power. Ruth fixed lunch and they headed south after they ate. I told them that we couldn’t use much more than 6,000-gallons of gasoline until I could find more stabilizer. I also told them that I didn’t have any stabilizer for the diesel fuel and finding it would probably be the next thing on our list.

An hour and half later, two tankers pulled into the acreage, both double tanked. When I asked, I was told they had one of gas and one of diesel. They took Bill’s pickup back to Kettleman City to pick up Ron’s pickup. I did a quick calculation and realized that at full power, we had about six months’ worth of diesel and a lifetime supply of gasoline.

“Where did you get the PRI-G?”

Bad Times – Chapter 5

“Battery Stuff. They’re shipping location is Grants Pass, Oregon. You’d take 99 to Sacramento and pick up I-5. I figure it’s around 500 miles, one way. They carry both PRI-D and PRI-G in the one gallon containers.”

“You need 5-gallons of PRI-G and 8-gallons of PRI-D?”

“I need all the PRI-D that they have in stock. That generator will burn around 32,000-gallons per year. I seriously doubt the power will be back on soon. You might just as well get all the PRI-G and PRI-D they have.”

They left the next day and about two hours after they left, I remembered that Battery Stuff didn’t carry the PRI-Occide. I’d settle for a pickup load of the stabilizers but if they found more, I’m sure they’d grab a U-Haul and bring it back. It didn’t occur to me that they’d have any trouble in Grants Pass, or getting there and back.

I figured a day up and a day back, including what time it would take for them to load the PRI products and even grab a U-Haul. When they didn’t get back at the end of the second day, I began to fret something awful but tried to keep up a brave face, if for Sarah and no one else. By noon on the third day, I was as nervous as a cat in a room full of rocking chairs. They pulled in well past dusk, apparently no worse for the wear.

“Mind telling me just where in the hell you’ve been?”

“Sunnyvale.”

“What is in Sunnyvale besides a lot of fallout?”

“An HRO store. We got your TS-2000, a US Tower 55’ mast and coax. We also pretty much cleaned them out on mobiles and hand held radios. Bill added an amplifier so you can put out a full 1,500 watts on 10 meters.”

“Any problem adjusting that to 11 meters?”

“No.”

Ten meters is an amateur frequency however, 11 meters is what CB radios use. The maximum allowed output was 4 watts on AM and 12 watts on SSB.

“We also picked up some Cobra 148GTL radios and Wilson 5000 antennas with magnetic mounts. They were the only ones we could find with SSB. For hand held radios, we had to settle for the HH 38 WX ST.”

“Bill, can you install all of that?”

“No problem, Sam. Give me a few days to get everything setup and installed. I have a question; did you pull guard duty all by yourself?”

“Ruth and Sarah shared the daylight hours and I took it from sundown until dawn.”

“You must be exhausted.”

“I am today, I was so worried about you fellas not being home last night, I haven’t gone to bed.”

“What do you figure for a guard rotation?”

“How would you feel about 4 hours on and 8 hours off for the three of us? I figure that Ruth and Sarah can back us up. You two figure out some kind of schedule and I’ll follow it. Frankly, I’m tired of making decisions. I’m going to bed.”

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Our hot water heater was electrical as is common in many rural areas where electricity is readily available and there is no natural gas. Unfortunately, it only held 40 gallons. I took a hot shower and slipped into bed. My lights were out from the time I put my head down. I don’t know if it was fatigue, strain or a combination; I didn’t get up until the next morning. I could see where Ruth had been in bed and I hadn’t even noticed.

“Keep that livestock in the pole barn. I don’t want them eating the grass.”

“What are we going to do when we run out of hay?”

“I don’t know. I read a study that said:

“More than 25,000 residents were exposed to external gamma radiation as well as internally from fission products (primarily from cesium-137, strontium-90, ruthenium-106, and zirconium-95) released into the Techa river from the nearby Mayak plutonium production facility, predominately in the early 1950s. Studies have been conducted of cancer mortality in residents and their offspring, as well as pregnancy outcomes. Initial dose estimates were based on average doses reconstructed for settlements. Efforts are ongoing to estimate individual doses for members of this resident cohort. To date, there is no evidence of a decrease in birth rate or fertility in the exposed population and no increased incidence of spontaneous abortions or stillbirths. There is some evidence of a statistically significant increase in total cancer mortality. Current estimates of the excess absolute risk (EAR) of leukemia in this cohort is 0.85 per 10,000 person-year Gy (95% confidence interval 0.2, 1.5), and for solid tumors the relative risk estimate is 0.65 per Gy (95% confidence interval -0.3, 1.0). Median dose estimates for soft tissue in this cohort are 7 mSv (maximum 456 mSv), and for bone marrow are 253 mSv (maximum 2021 mSv). Estimates of the relative risk for cancer of the esophagus, stomach and lung are similar to those reported for atomic bomb survivors. There is no evidence of an

increase in cancer mortality in the offspring of exposed residents. There has also been one study of persons living in the town of Ozyorsk exposed to fallout from the nearby Mayak nuclear facility. An excess of thyroid cancer, 3-4 times expected relative to rates for all of Russia, has been observed. The excess is somewhat lower (1.5-2-fold higher) based on a comparison with Chelyabinsk Oblast rates. No estimates of radiation dose were included in this study. /Cesium-137, strontium-90, ruthenium-106 and zirconium-95 fission products.

“Epidemiological studies have found little or no association between oral exposure to radioactive strontium from fallout and cancer effects in humans. In an epidemiological study using the Danish cancer registry, no association was found between the incidence of thyroid cancer in Denmark between 1943 and 1988 and the levels of skeletal incorporation of 90-Sr from fallout. In another epidemiological study, data collected between 1959 and 1970 in a strontium-90 monitoring program in Glasgow, Scotland, were used to identify three cohorts with respect to the hypothetical risk for leukemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, acute myeloid leukemia, all childhood cancers combined, and bone tumors. The three cohorts were a high risk group born in 1963-1966 (exposed to high levels of fallout, i.e., strontium-90, at a young age), a medium risk group born in 1959-1962 (exposed to high levels at an older age), and a low risk group born after 1966. Cumulative incidences for all cancers, leukemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and acute myeloid leukemia all showed a secular (progressive, noncyclical) increasing trend for children born before 1982. However, the study found no evidence for increased risks of total cancers, leukemia and Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, or acute myeloid leukemia for cohorts born during the period of highest fallout (radiostrontium) exposure. The few cases of bone tumors showed a statistically nonsignificant increase for children born during the 'high risk' period. In contrast, the Techa River population that was exposed to contaminated water and food as a result of releases from a nuclear weapons facility exhibited a significant increase in the incidence of leukemia.”

“What’s that mean?”

“I guess once the hay is gone and we have to grow it, we’ll stop drinking milk and making cheese.”

“You have powdered milk don’t you?”

“Only a few bags, it ran around \$3 a pound and came in 50-pound bags.”

“I didn’t realize that Ruth and you had that much food.”

“I had hoped that Sarah and you, as well as Ron, would be able to get here before TSHTF. I hadn’t planned on the economy doing it, however. Anyway, our preparations were appropriate for six adults for at least 4 to 5 years. Children won’t eat enough at this age to make any difference. Just between you and me, I wish Ron had hooked up with someone, because I included food for her too.”

“He was partial to the office gal at work. He told me not to mention it to anyone. I don’t suppose she made it through though.”

“I knew he was dating a gal in Fresno, but he never told me who. You say he was partial to the gal at the office, so I’ll bet it was her. I’d be willing to risk a trip up to Fresno to see if we could find her and bring her out here.”

“Tell him that, Sam; I believe he’s worried about her and really cares for her.”

“Ron, do you want to Fresno and look for your girlfriend?”

“I didn’t want to bring it up after you said, *We aren’t going into Fresno for any reason whatsoever.*”

“I wasn’t thinking about your girlfriend when I said that. What I meant was we wouldn’t do any salvaging in Fresno. Get your gun and tell Bill to get his. We’ll take your pick up because it has the largest cab. I’ll go get my weapons.”

“If I’m guessing right, she would have been at her apartment. It has a basement and I gave her half of my MREs and water so she was prepared, just in case. I also bought her a used Browning High Power and two boxes of cartridges. We went to the range until she was proficient although not the best shooter. I hope you don’t mind, but I gave her some of your extra magazines.”

“What’s her name?”

“Cindy McCabe. She’s about 4” shorter than me, has an average figure and brunette hair that she wears around shoulder length. I never asked her weight, but I’d guess around 110-pounds.”

“How close were you?”

“I was considering proposing when I was completely back on my feet.”

“Does she feel the same way?”

“I think so; I’d have to say yes.”

“We might find a preacher, but you could never get a license, you know.”

“In times like this, Dad, I’d think that common law marriage would be prevalent.”

“They outlawed that in California in 1895, Ron.”

“You could always go to Nevada,” Bill suggested.

“I don’t know that I want to go to Sacramento again.”

“Why not?” I asked.

“We were shot at when we passed through Sacramento. He or she missed, but I wouldn’t want to give him, or her, a second chance.”

“Where did that happen?”

“It happened where I-5 crosses the American River.”

“Take 50 east. You’d pick that up as soon as you hit Sacramento. You have to go through Carson City, but that’s the way I always go.”

“You don’t pick up I-80 and go direct?”

“Nope.”

“Don’t you have to go by Folsom Prison?”

“Yep.”

“Do you think that’s a good idea?”

“I sort of assumed that when Obama gave the announcement, they went into lockdown. Odds are all you’d find there were lots of bodies.”

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“Mr. President, we have completed our initial survey of the damage. The best estimate by the Corp of Engineers is that it will take around 20 years to clean up the damage caused by the attack and an additional 25-30 years to rebuild.”

“There’s no way around that?”

“No sir. Their estimate assumes the full cooperation of all the remaining citizens of the country.”

“Meanwhile, there are no deliveries of foodstuffs, fuel or anything, right?”

“That’s correct. One thing that may not be a problem is the convicts in our prison system. A country wide order went out ordering all federal prisons into lockdown. All of the Governors were notified and most issued similar orders. To the best of our knowledge the prisoners are still locked down in their cells or barracks.”

◦

“Starved to death?”

“Seems likely; I refuse to believe that they would just turn them loose. If anything, that would add to our problems. I could be wrong, Ron, but I would prefer to think all of the convicts are still in their cells unless they were able to escape.”

“How many inmates did they have?”

“Between California State Prison, Sacramento and Folsom State Prison, around 8,000, maybe a little less. It’s low and medium security, so I suppose a breakout was possible even if they locked them down.”

“It’s that building right over there.”

“Ron, you’re in charge, what do you want us to do?”

“Dad, you stay here by the truck and Bill can come with me. He knows what Cindy looks like and we can cover twice as much space in the same time.”

It was fifteen minutes before they returned. They had in tow a young woman who fit the description that Ron had given on the way to town. She had two suit cases and the guys were carrying MREs and water.

“Dad, this is Cindy; Cindy, my father, Sam. Bill and I are going back for the rest. You can put her things in the back and get her strapped in.”

“Hi Cindy, I’m pleased to meet you. I knew Ron was dating, but didn’t know who. Bill filled me in a little and then Ron filled me in some more on the way to town.”

“Are you sure it won’t be an imposition, Mr. George?”

“It’s Sam and it’s no imposition; I had planned another person and it appears that you’re the person I planned for.”

“Ron gave me this pistol.”

“Yes, he told us. That’s a very good firearm; all Browning’s are very good firearms.”

“The trigger is hard to pull.”

“That’s because he didn’t remove the magazine safety. Since there is no Browning to honor the warranty, we’ll remove it.”

“Is it necessary?”

“Actually, it an inconvenience; with it installed, you can’t fire the pistol unless a magazine is inserted. I’m not sure what we’re going to do for a rifle and shotgun for you.”

“The only firearm I’ve ever shot is the Browning, against my better judgment, I might add.”

“Are you opposed to firearms?”

“This isn’t the wild, wild west. I suppose they’re ok for hunting and cops have to have them.”

“Cindy, I hate to be the one to tell you but things have changed. Our economy was in the toilet like it was in the 1930s and just like then, we ended up in a war. This war was unlike anything we’ve ever seen, countries exchanging nuclear weapons. Unlike the 1940s, we can’t introduce rationing and rally around the flag. We’ll have to grow what we eat and protect it from those who would take it from us. I don’t have a problem sharing, as in your case, but I’m not giving it up just because someone else didn’t believe in the need to prepare.”

“Do you have a lot of food?”

“About a 4-5 year supply for 6 people.”

“Where did you get it?”

“We bought it or grew it ourselves. Some of the things we can’t produce are stored in very large quantities. It was difficult to do because we’re on a fixed income and both Ruth and I lost our jobs. Like most folks, we didn’t have a huge saving account for retirement.”

“I see; what kind of rifle are you guys carrying?”

“They are the civilian version of the M14. They’ve been modified to have a National Match flashhider and a bayonet lug. I also had bayonets made up for them based on the one used on the Garand rifle early in WW II. They shoot a .30 caliber cartridge and the magazine holds 20.”

“And you can’t get me one?”

“We might if we were lucky. I do have a bolt action rifle with a scope that shoots the same caliber ammo and 1,000-rounds of match grade ammo for it. Since I couldn’t modify the rifle and flashhider for you if we found one, I’ll talk to Ron about getting you shooting the Winchester. If you did, you wouldn’t need a shotgun either. However, they’re easy to find at someplace like Big Five Sporting Goods.”

“Do you have a bedroom for me?”

“Not by yourself. You can sleep with Ron or sleep on the couch, that’s up to you.”

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Cindy decided to sleep in Ron’s bed, but neither of them indicated they were intimate. He asked about marriage and she accepted. They decided to risk a trip to Reno to make it mostly legal. He said he’d find her a M1A, more magazines and ammo up there. I gave him the name of some stores he might check out. That so called Lithuanian surplus was manufactured around 2003. They might call it surplus, but I rather suspected it was manufacturer specifically for the American market. It also seemed like the ammo dealers had imported millions of rounds.

Our experience with surplus ammo was limited to some of the South African, Lithuanian and some of that Igman. All worked well in the M1A and we had few, if any, FTF or FTE. The differences among the ammo were so small that they worked just fine in the M1A which is a NATO spec chamber and throat. Supposed to be... it would shoot .308 Winchester just fine. I listed the *brands* in order of preference and I like the South African and wanted to try the Australian. I only found one place on the web that had the Australian and didn’t order any because of the price.

We decided to change the shifts slightly so Bill and I could provide 24/7 coverage until Ron and Cindy got back. We decided on 6 on/6 off, giving us each a day shift and a night shift. It occurs to me to mention about where we live; south of Fresno, off of 41 a short way.

“I could only get 4,000-rounds. The guy installed the flashhider and I found an M-6 bayonet.”

“How many magazines?”

“Twenty-five of the T-57s.”

“I have another M-1942 that I had modified, so if Cindy wants the longer bayonet, it’s available. I guess the only weapon she lacks is a 590A1.”

“I don’t think she’ll need one. If we find one, that’s different. Any trouble while we were gone?”

“Nope. What’s that you have in the chicken coop?”

“Roosters.”

“When you get a minute, clip their wings and put them in with the hens.”

All of the traveling the boys had done after the war was necessary because we weren't as prepared as we should have been. They'd risked a lot going to Grants Pass and Sunnyvale. Even the trip to Reno so Ron and Cindy could get married wasn't without risks, although they avoided Sacramento by going over to 395, then north.

The sky was less than clear due in part to the smoke and such from the attack. It was nominally cooler and I knew that we'd been stuck on a solar minimum. All of which combined to cool off the Big Valley by several degrees. Not enough so we couldn't grow a garden thank God, but around 20° cooler. We doubled the garden and added more bean plants and chilies. We concentrated on pinto, large white, small white and pink beans. Under ideal conditions, we could only store the potato crop around six months. The canned goods were good for around two years. Frozen meat in vacuum bags would last about a year.

"Do you know what I miss most?"

"Going out to eat?"

"No, we didn't do much of that because it was too expensive. The thing I miss the most is TV. Shows like the History Channel and the Military Channel. We have movies on VHS and DVD but it's not the same."

"I miss my snacks, like Twinkies, Hostess Cupcakes and candy bars."

"We have candy bars but only one kind, Snickers Almond."

"Do you have a lot?"

"We probably have a dozen boxes. If we went to Costco, we could load up on candy bars, if you wanted."

"If I went to Costco, I'd get more than candy bars Sam."

"Assuming that there's anything left, you mean."

"That, too. Sure Ruth and you have a four year food supply, but wouldn't you like to have more? There are some things you can never have too much of like..."

"Toilet paper, coffee and things you can't make for yourself."

"Do you think it's worth a try?"

"If nothing else, we could get you more candy bars. Sure, let's do it."

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There were three stores in the area, Fresno, Fresno North and Clovis. I didn't expect we'd find one that had anything inside after this long, but it wouldn't take that long to check them out. We had the U-Haul trailer they borrowed from Grants Pass and could probably find two more.

"Ready?"

"Are we taking one pickup or all three?"

"We'll take all three and the U-Haul. If we find something in one of the stores, we can always get more U-Haul trailers."

Our first stop was Fresno and the doors were open. We looked inside and there wasn't anything other than spoiled meat left. Everything, even toothbrushes and toothpaste, was gone. Someone had cut through the wire and accessed the area containing their cigarettes. Fresno North had been broken into and most of the things taken. However, Costco puts pallets on top of the merchandise and a few remained. We got a powered pallet jack and began to go through the contents. There wasn't a lot, but we found a pallet of Folgers, one of Charmin and several with those baking mixes made by Krusteaz. It was enough to fill the trailer and we still had three pickups to fill. So, we went to the last store in Clovis.

"Dad, this place is locked up tighter than a drum."

"You don't suppose we actually got lucky, do you?"

"I think we're going to need to use breaching charges on the back door to get in."

"You have some?"

"Yes, I bought 20 of them for around \$4 each. Why don't we go get two U-Hauls before we begin? Once we break in I rather not spend any more time here than we have to."

We got two enclosed 6x12 U-Haul trailers and came back. It took two breaching rounds to blow the lock off and that let us into the back of the store. We each took a trolley and began loading up LTS food. Although the refrigeration was off, it was cold in the store so we took butter and several other dairy case items and things like bacon, hams; plus Folgers and so forth. We went home and unloaded the pickups, dropped the trailers and went back for three more trailers.

By the time we finished, we'd put a large dent in the food supply at the Clovis Costco. I think the only reason we stopped was the realization that we didn't have anywhere to store the food besides the trailers we borrowed. Ruth and the girls took an inventory of what we'd brought home and ended up making a list of things they thought we'd missed. Nobody smoked, but they said we should get all of the cigarettes to use as bar-

ter goods. There were spices I didn't know she used, and she wanted us to get all of the bottled water.

Bad Times – Chapter 6

“Ok, but after that, I don’t want to go back. We got everything on your list and some things we forgot like those candy bars that we went looking for in the beginning. We didn’t bring the diet sodas because they go bad. They didn’t have that much regular soda.”

“Sam, this is good. Now if we’re busy or don’t feel like cooking, we can open some of the cans of chili and have that instead.”

“Were you ok while we were gone? No visitors or vagrants showing up looking for handouts?”

“You don’t see any bodies, do you?”

“Not one. We really improved our situation with that Costco in Clovis. It’s only a guess, but I think we may have added two more years with what we’re growing.”

“I thought we were supposed to have a nuclear winter or something.”

“Ruth, it’s about 20° colder than normal and the sky still isn’t clear. I could be wrong about what a nuclear winter is, but I think we’re experiencing one.”

“That means it will be cold. What do you plan on burning in the furnace, wood or coal?”

“I suppose we could burn either, depending on what we can find. I wouldn’t mind having more firewood for the fireplace though. I’ll talk to Ron about what he’s seen in town and we’ll get whatever is available.”

“Full Circle Energy, Dad. They have a project to gasify coal. I think it would be pretty hard to do that without the basic materials.”

“What about firewood?”

“Do you need a lot? All we’d have to do is look for fireplace chimneys and take their firewood if nobody is there.”

“And call it abandoned property?”

“If there is nobody there, it’s abandoned.”

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“Mr. President, I have a report on the dispersal of our military forces.”

“Where did you send them?”

“We sent them to the locations where the Chinese exploded a warhead. Our immediate goal is to assess the needs of the survivors and provide the medical treatment and food they require. Beyond that, we’re establishing residential centers they can be moved to.”

“Residential Centers?”

“FEMA Camps, sir.”

“But they’ll get national health care and we’ll take care of them, right?”

“To the best of our ability, yes. To avoid having people running around and getting into mischief, we’ve decided to fence in the camps and station guards.”

“What are you doing for housing?”

“Sixteen-person military tents, sir. We believe that we can provide every person with between 1,200 and 1,500 calories per day.”

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Six years for six people? That sounds like a lot; until you realize that once it’s gone, there may be no replacing those six years for six people. Did anyone really believe that Ford would reopen their assembly line next week or Nabisco would be firing up their ovens anytime soon? Even if you could read the label on a package and get an address, that would be the headquarters, not the manufacturing plant.

I knew where several plants were here in the Big Valley and assumed that might help some. On the other hand how much dried chopped onion and garlic would a person need? McCormick produced those in Gilroy. During the past fifteen years, plants had sprung up everywhere and I assumed each plant would have a small amount of finished inventory. At least, we could hope. I wasn’t alone in my knowledge of what was available here, everyone in the San Joaquin Valley knew about those plants and facilities and although we hadn’t crossed swords with anyone, yet, that didn’t mean they weren’t there.

I thought about all of the things that could happen in the immediate future. We could get attacked by people looking for food and get killed in the process. We could keep an extremely low profile and exist without anyone knowing we were here. With extremely good luck, we could produce what we eat and eat what we produced. The only outside trips would be to Kettleman City for diesel fuel. And then, it occurred to me that with Sarah pregnant and Cindy likely to be soon, we might have a problem birthing babies.

The age old wisdom said, *Don’t cross the bridge until you get to it*, and the other version was, *Don’t count your chickens before they hatch*. If we didn’t follow that, we’d worry ourselves to death. We had the 24/7 watch for trouble and now six adults to defend the

place. We didn't have any military weapons except the M1As and the 590A1s, unless you counted the pistols. I mean, we didn't have hand grenades or even dynamite. We didn't have any anti-tank rockets or mortars. If the attackers had some, we'd be up the creek.

"Is that enough fire wood?"

"How much did you get?"

"Eight pickup loads, about 6 cords."

"Did you find coal?"

"We found the coal; we just need a dump truck to get here."

"Did you try the City Yard?"

"That's next. How much coal do you want?"

"If they're five yard dump trucks, a half of dozen loads will keep us going for a while."

The simple truth of it was that it rarely got cold enough to start a fire in the furnace and I had no idea. That's also why I hadn't replaced the furnace with a newer propane fueled unit, why spend the money on something you may never need? I wondered if there was some way we could capture the heat the generator put out, using a heat exchanger or something like that. We might be biting off more than we could chew; I better let that go for now.

"That's one hell of a pile of coal; you want some transferred to the coal room?"

"You didn't fill it?"

"I thought Bill or you would while I was hauling it."

"I get Bill and two shovels. Your mother would have a fit if she found out that we didn't fill the coal room."

"How cold do you expect it to get this winter?"

"Below freezing, probably under 20°F."

"That will be good weather to butcher hogs."

"We'll have to build a smoke house to cure the hams and bacon. Next time one of you is town, get some hickory chips."

“I already did, Dad. I’ve been trying to plan ahead.”

“Did you figure what you’re going to do when Cindy gets pregnant and is about to have the baby? There aren’t any operating hospitals that I know of.”

“I thought I’d cross that bridge when I got to it.”

Smart boy. Now, if he could get Cindy trained on the rifle he bought her, we’d have six chances to stop whomever, rather than five. I worry a lot. That’s why we were as prepared as we were. It’s never a question of if, just a question of when and what. I’d have put WW III a little further down on the list and chosen the *Big One*, but I’d have been wrong. Give three men the time and the means to clean out a Costco Wholesale store would give those three men the opportunity to get enough food they could even trade some away. I put a can of coffee at around \$15 now. A carton of smokes was worth every bit of \$60, in gold at \$1,200 an ounce.

People don’t realize why California people are big on M1As. It’s a simple fact of life; AR15s are mostly illegal in California because California has its own assault weapons ban. The M1A rifle with a muzzle brake instead of a flashhider is completely legal, although expensive. Then, if you want to put back the things it should have had, you buy the parts and have them shipped to someone who doesn’t live in California and have them forward them. I had a chance to shoot both and carried the M16. It was a real POS, got dirty real quick. The M14 had no such problems.

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You’ve heard the debate before: AR-15 or M14/M1A? What you already know is that these two rifles represent two vastly different legacies—John Garand as the brilliant, old guard inventor of the M1 Garand service rifle, called by General Patton the best war implement ever devised; Eugene Stoner, the unknown innovator at Fairchild/Armalite whose revolutionary designs remain current issue. The purpose of this page is to compare the commercially manufactured M1A and AR-15 series in light of the historical background of their development, designs, intended and current uses, and performance.

John Garand developed what later became the .30-06 M1 rifle in the late 1930s. After the M1 was used with great success in World War II, improvements in propellants and cartridge design led to the development of the 7.62×51mm cartridge with 147 grain bullet and T44 prototype rifle in the 1950s as the *battle rifle* of the future. The 7.62mm cartridge had almost the same ballistic properties as the .30-06 in a slightly smaller, metric package. The T44 was tested against several other modern 7.62mm designs, including the FN FAL, HK G3, and Armalite AR-10. In addition to the positive results of the testing competition, political concerns may have played a significant role in selecting a rifle for production. The T44 was more traditional in appearance and ergonomics than the futuristic and awkward-looking *black rifles* submitted by other designers. The M14 was

adopted as a standard infantry rifle by the Army in 1957 and the Marine Corps in a similar time frame, and remained standard issue for Marines until the late 1960s.

Eugene Stoner had responded to the doctrinal changes in the Army with the Armalite AR-15 – his entry into the program. The AR-15 was the American answer to the AK-47. Essentially a scaled-down version of the AR-10, the AR-15 was designed to maximize firepower per unit of weight, with select-fire for semi and auto. The initial version weighed about 7.2 pounds, which was 30% lighter than the battle rifles of the time. Its 5.56mm cartridge with 55 grain bullet weighs about 50% less than the 7.62mm cartridge. So with no increase in weight, the AR-15 equipped soldier was able to carry at least twice as much ammunition. The AR-15 was immediately adopted for a Special Forces role as it was supposed to be ideal for the kind of unconventional warfare being waged in the jungles of Vietnam. Reliability complaints tempered its early success, however.

Throughout the 1960s, user feedback from Vietnam resulted in minor changes such as the replacement of the original pronged flash suppressor with a birdcage version to prevent snagging on vegetation. The M16A1 was adopted in the 1970s. The M16A2, a further refinement of the design, was adopted by the Army in 1982. Serious critics of military doctrine hold that the M16A2 rifle is the standard by which all military rifles of the future will be judged. This variant has fire modes of semi and three-round burst. The system incorporates an adjustable dual-aperture rear sight that corrects for both windage and elevation, a heavier barrel to increase accuracy, 1-in-7 rifling, and an effective muzzle compensator to prevent muzzle climb during operation. Contrast these improvements with the development of the M14 since 1957; the only major changes in the M14 as issued have been the shift from wooden stocks to synthetic to increase durability. Some point to this lack of improvements as evidence the M14 was nearly perfect as originally issued, which makes sense when one realizes the M14 incorporated years of improvements to the original M1 Garand design. Garand helped design the M14.

Today, the M16A2 and M14 remain standard issue; the M16A2/A4 is issued to front-line riflemen in the Army and Marine Corps, while the M14 is issued to some users by preference and others by design in a Special Forces role. The M14 is often used in Navy Seals units, apparently. Photographic evidence from the 1991 Gulf War and other conflicts indicates that there are a significant number of M14 rifles in use, usually updated with modern optics. As popularized in *Black Hawk Down*, the M14 rifle purportedly finds favor among some snipers.

The slight resurgence of M14's in Afghanistan and Iraq (as publicized by proponents of this rifle) should not be surprising; at extended ranges in a desert or mountainous setting, the advantages of an assault rifles higher rates of fire and medium weight ammunition diminish greatly. Similarly, in sandy or dirty conditions the M14 is considered to be significantly more reliable. However, operations in close quarters against a sophisticated and numerous opposition seem to present great challenges for users of the M14, particularly in the confusing and exhausting environment of urban warfare where a soldier might inadvertently walk around a corner from relative calm into a gang of insur-

gents armed with AKs.

How does this historical background translate into the civilian market? Because both rifles are standard issue, surplus parts are widely available and inexpensive. The only differences between the USGI M16A2 and civilian AR-15 are the bolt and bolt carrier, trigger group, auto sear, and internal dimensions of the lower receiver. Thus any civilian AR-15 can accept M16 magazines, uppers, stocks, grips, sights, and other accessories. The differences between the M1A and M14 are even fewer: absence of select fire controls and different sear. M14 bolts, barrels, magazines, stocks, and other accessories all work with the M1A. Thus both rifles are inexpensive to maintain and ordinary maintenance can be done entirely by oneself. These factors are a huge part of my desire to own a military-descended rifle.

The type of community you live in may be an important consideration in choosing between the two models; while cities can be dense and closely spaced, the urban jungle can also present long ranges (both vertically and horizontally) and a lot of open space. Contrast the urban setting with a suburban one of row houses and cul-de-sacs where open space is limited, and with a rural farmhouse surrounded by open land. Consider a forest setting with dense vegetation and natural obstacles, or with a coastal setting that has rolling hills and large open spaces. Maritime use also presents unique concerns, as will be explored later.

The scope of this review is limited to the models I actually tested: Pre-ban "green label" Colt AR-15A2 and Post-ban Springfield Armory M1A. Obviously, there are other variants of the AR-15 that may be more suited to your purposes, but I do not have access to a post-ban AR-15 or an M4-type carbine. The Pre-ban Colt price ranges from \$1,200 to \$2,000 at last check depending on condition, and a new post-ban Bushmaster can be had for \$800. The M1A starts at \$1,300 retail, but non-Springfield models like Poly Technologies M14S (if you can find them) are in the \$900 range. The price of the rifles is not very important to this comparison, because the purpose is to evaluate which is the best for the vast majority of users, not which is the most value for the money.

Put another way, the M1A is a Main Battle Rifle and the AR-15 is an Assault Weapon. The M1A with the compensator is semi-automatic and accepts detachable magazines, two points, and hence is legal. The AR-15 has a pistol grip and is semi auto and if it had detachable magazines would have three points and be illegal, hence the fixed 10 round built in magazine that's a bitch to load. People who don't live here can't seem to understand. Even with FMJ ammo, that .30 caliber slug will rip you a new one and you can park a truck in the hole the BTHP or BTSP creates.

We now had more rifles than people, if you count my model 70. It was good enough for Carlos Hathcock and it would be good enough for us, although he may have had a better scope. Hathcock used a Unertl 10X scope and his rifle was a .30-06.

Unertl Optical Company is currently offering for sale to the shooting public the highly sought after Genuine Original Unertl 10X Tactical scope that Unertl made for the

USMC, FBI, and other government agencies. These scopes are not marked USMC, as were the scopes Unertl made for the US Marine Corps. These scopes are marked "UNERTL-10X" and serialized beginning with serial number T0001 and ascending sequentially.

The retail price of the UNERTL-10X Tactical is \$2500.00 plus shipping & insurance. You may now purchase either the standard scope for the M40A1 or the 50 Caliber scope. The availability of these telescopic sights is extremely limited due to their being manufactured in the USA by skilled craftsmen, not mass produced in some foreign sweat shop.

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"Twelve hundred calories? Isn't that the level of a diet?"

"Yes, sir, provided they're working. However, being cared for in the camps will mean fewer calories are required because they'll basically be just sitting around."

"How does that square with full civilian cooperation in the cleanup and reconstruction?"

"During initial cleanup, with high levels of radiation remaining, they would just be in the way. As we progress beyond initial cleanup, we'll move them to the involved area and increase their rations."

"How do you intend to do that? This country has no grain surplus because Ronald Reagan's advisor said it was too expensive to maintain. We've had several years of bad crops and my predecessor insisted of converting corn into ethanol."

"Our plan was to provide the farmers with the fuel and seed they need in exchange for a portion of their crops."

"How large of a portion?"

"Seventy-five percent."

"I see... we leave them with enough to feed some livestock."

"Exactly."

"Tell me about the Chinese. What did our attack on them accomplish?"

"We estimate that we killed about 60% of their population, leaving around 560 million Chinese alive."

"How does that compare with the US?"

“We estimate that the US lost around 100 million in the attack with an additional 50 million dying from the effects. Basically, they lost 60% to our 50%.”

“I guess that means that we won.”

◦

Do you have any idea how many bags of beans and rice you could buy for \$2,500 plus shipping and insurance? Back when rice was cheap, ala \$20 for 50-pounds and beans were cheap, ala \$13 for 25 pounds, a basement full. Call it \$46, just to keep the quantities even and you could buy 54 bags of rice and 108 bags of beans. That's 2,700 pounds of each. And, if you figure on one pound of each per day times three, you had a 2½ year supply of beans and rice. The upside of eating beans and rice as part of a regular diet is that your digestive tract adjusts to the beans and doesn't convert them to methane. I'd lived on them for a while and learned that lesson. I'd always wondered how the pioneers lived on beans all the time and that was the answer.

To keep outside people from knowing which channel to tune in on with the CB radios, we used the channel that was the date and reserved the channels above channels 31 for tactical channels. The 19th bothered me the most because it was probably the most used channel. We'd immediately switch to Tac-1 though Tac-9 if we came up against anyone of concern, at least in theory.

Our goal was to be left in peace, grow our gardens, raise the livestock and just get through each day intact. Only being 2 miles off highway 41 meant that wasn't to be. Many had fled Fresno when the bombs/warheads had fallen, no doubt camping out in the Sierra Nevada's. As summer turned to fall and fall to winter, they returned, ahead of the snow. Then, they attempted to get food, emptying every grocery and wholesale warehouse in the area. Finally, when those supplies were exhausted, they began to search the countryside looking for abandoned farms and livestock. If they wanted livestock, they should have looked at Harris Feed Company's 800 acre feedlot just off I-5. It typically contained over 100,000 head of cattle being finished.

The acreage obviously had livestock and clearly wasn't abandoned as evidenced from the smoke/steam rising from the furnace chimney. The presence of two double-tankers indicated some post apocalypse activity. Parked further off to the side was the third tanker containing the gasoline. We located, filled and brought back a second diesel tanker so we would only be without power for a few minutes when one ran empty and we had to switch over. We never knew what trouble might be lurking right around the corner.

“I have a slow moving pickup.”

“Switch to Tac-3 (channel 34) and I'll alert the others.”

The others consisted of Bill and Ruth. Cindy wasn't too far along and might be able to help but Sarah was bigger than a barn and not getting around well.

"Ron, how many people do you see?"

"Three in the pickup and the back is empty."

"I'll stop them when they get to our driveway, you come up behind them. Don't get spotted, you're our backup."

Click, click.

I walked out into the road, bold as brass and flagged them down. Cindy had my back with the model 70.

"This is a dead end road fellas and it ends just a short way up. Can I help you? Are you looking for something?"

"We're looking for food. All the stores in Fresno have been emptied out."

"I'm Sam George and I didn't get your name."

"I didn't give it. Do you have food?"

"Do I look hungry?"

"Actually, you look positively chubby. That all the backup you've got? I only see one man and one woman."

"It's been enough so far."

In case you're wondering, this was close up work and I was carrying my Mossy 590A1. Ruth had a shotgun and Bill had his M1A. Ron, who was working his way up the road, had the Mossy slung over his back and his M1A in his hands. We were well armed to deal with only three men.

"Why don't you fellas step outta that pickup and we'll talk?"

"What for, so you can gun us down?"

"It's more likely to happen if you don't get down."

The driver made a movement and I realized that he'd just put the pickup in gear. I dumped a load of 00 into his left front tire. They bailed out; guns in hand and Bill got the first passenger, center mass. I raised my barrel slightly and took out the driver. When

the second passenger came out, hands up, Ruth hesitated and he reached over his shoulder and came up with a Glock. Ron cut his spinal cord in half.

“Load them up in the back of the pickup and change out the front tire. We’ll take them back to Fresno and leave the pickup sit. It might send a message that we’re not to be fooled with.”

“It could backfire and send the message that we have something worth protecting, Dad.”

“I suppose you’re right, but I don’t want the bodies found here. No, we’ll do it my way and hope they get the message.”

The message they apparently got was that a well-armed force of unknown size, located somewhere south of Fresno had something worth protecting. The force had clearly demonstrated a willingness to protect whatever it was that they had. The conclusion was that the only way to deal with said force was with a larger, better armed force. They began cleaning out armories. And, when they went looking, their number was closer to 30 than 3.

We switched Cindy to the M1A and gave Sarah the Winchester so she didn’t have to leave the house. We had 150 of the 20-round magazines and divided them 5 ways, giving everyone, with an M1A, 30 magazines. We used a backhoe and dug a trench along the road. It was only about 4’ deep and had the excavated dirt piled on the road side. It extended from our fence line all the way to our driveway. Ruth used some canvas and sewed up some shoulder bags to hold the magazines.

Although we didn’t know it, this would be the true test of the M1A vs. the M16. We spent hours practicing because Fresno is the home of Pinnacle Body Armor and they make Dragon Skin. We hadn’t bothered to look for body armor because we had been alone for a very long time and it didn’t occur to us at the time.

The Mozambique Drill is three shots: two to the chest and one to the head, without an assessment between. Assessment after the initial pair is not required since we will immediately transition to an incapacitating shot. The Mozambique Drill appears to be similar to the Failure to Stop Drill at first, but there are critical differences between the two techniques.

Bad Times – Chapter 7

- 1) First, the Failure Drill is a response to a pair to the chest. The shooter only intended to fire two rounds, but those two rounds did not achieve the desired effect, so an alternate aim point was selected. With the Mozambique, the shooter intends to fire three shots into the adversary prior to beginning the engagement.
- 2) The Failure Drill is a response, and therefore can only be executed after an assessment of the target. The Mozambique is a stand-alone drill. It automatically compensates for the first rounds being insufficient to immediately end an engagement.
- 3) The Failure Drill opens up options for the shooter after the first pair fails. The shooter may choose to destroy the mobility of the target or instantly incapacitate the target. The Mozambique Drill is intended to immediately and unquestioningly end the engagement regardless of the effect of the initial pair.
- 4) The Failure Drill is a response to the failure of a standard reaction, and may be employed at any range. The Mozambique Drill is intended as a close-range response for situations that require that a threat be destroyed immediately.

We practiced the Mozambique Drill, primarily because it placed three shots quicker. The first two rounds in the chest might knock the opponent on his butt, or not. The true disabling shot would be the shot to the head. With the amount of energy carried by the .30 caliber 147gr slug, they'd be down for a long time, if not for good. We were, after all, discussing a relatively short range for the M1A. The Mozambique drill was developed by Colonel Jeff Cooper.

Cooper's modern technique defines pragmatic use of the pistol for personal protection. The modern technique emphasizes two-handed shooting using the Weaver stance, replacing the once-prevalent one-handed shooting. The five elements of the modern technique are:

- A large caliber pistol, preferably a semi-auto
- The Weaver stance
- The Flash Sight Picture
- The Compressed Breath
- Surprise Trigger Break

Cooper favored the Colt M1911 and its variants. There are several conditions of readiness in which such a weapon can be carried. Cooper promulgated most of the following terms:

- Condition Zero: A round chambered, hammer cocked, safety off
- Condition One: A round chambered, hammer cocked, safety on
- Condition Two: A round chambered, hammer down
- Condition Three: Chamber empty

- Condition Four: Chamber empty, no magazine

Some of these configurations are safer than others (for instance, a single action pistol without a firing pin safety ought never be carried in Condition 2) while others are quicker to access (condition 1). In the interest of consistent training, most agencies that issue the 1911 specify the condition in which it is to be carried as a matter of local doctrine.

The most important means of surviving a lethal confrontation is, according to Cooper, neither the weapon nor the martial skills. The primary tool is the combat mindset, set forth in Principles of Personal Defense.

In the chapter on awareness, Cooper presents an adaptation of the Marine Corps system to differentiate states of readiness:

- White - Unaware and unprepared. If attacked in Condition White, the only thing that may save you is the inadequacy or ineptitude of your attacker. When confronted by something nasty, your reaction will probably be "Oh my God! This can't be happening to me."
- Yellow - Relaxed alert. No specific threat situation. Your mindset is that "today could be the day I may have to defend myself." You are simply aware that the world is an unfriendly place and that you are prepared to do something, if necessary. You use your eyes and ears, and realize that "I may have to SHOOT today." You don't have to be armed in this state but if you are armed you should be in Condition Yellow. You should always be in Yellow whenever you are in unfamiliar surroundings or among people you don't know. You can remain in Yellow for long periods, as long as you are able to "Watch your six". (In aviation 12 o'clock refers to the direction in front of the aircraft's nose. Six o'clock is the blind spot behind the pilot.) In Yellow, you are "taking in" surrounding information in a relaxed but alert manner, like a continuous 360 degree radar sweep.
- Orange - Specific alert. Something is not quite right and has gotten your attention. Your radar has picked up a specific alert. You shift your primary focus to determine if there is a threat (but you do not drop your six). Your mindset shifts to "I may have to shoot HIM today." In Condition Orange, you set a mental trigger: "If that goblin does 'x', I will need to stop him." Your pistol usually remains holstered in this state. Staying in Orange can be a bit of a mental strain, but you can stay in it for as long as you need to. If the threat proves to be nothing, you shift back to Condition Yellow.
- Red - Condition Red is fight. Your mental trigger has been "tripped" (established back in Condition Orange). You take appropriate action.

The USMC also uses "Condition Black" as actively engaged in combat, as do some of his successors, but Cooper always felt this is an unnecessary step and not in keeping with the mindset definitions.

Also note that the Color Code was never meant to be a warning system. Rather, the Color Code was designed to be a mental crutch. It was designed to allow someone to

“get over” the resistance that a normal person has in pointing a pistol at the center of someone's chest and pulling the trigger.

In short, the Color Code helps you “think” in a fight. As the level of danger increases, your resistance to shoot decreases. If you ever do go to Condition Red, the decision to use lethal force has already been made (your “mental trigger” has been tripped).

Cooper advocated four basic rules of gun safety:

- All guns are always loaded. Even if they are not, treat them as if they are.
- Never let the muzzle cover anything you are not willing to destroy. (For those who insist that this particular gun is unloaded, see Rule 1.)
- Keep your finger off the trigger till your sights are on the target. This is the Golden Rule. Its violation is directly responsible for about 60 percent of inadvertent discharges.
- Identify your target, and what is behind it. Never shoot at anything that you have not positively identified.

We went over Cooper's rules endlessly. If I had my way, it would be so ingrained no one would think twice. I cautioned Ruth that just because a guy had his hands up, that didn't mean he wasn't dangerous. Cops have people put their hands on top of their heads and interlace their fingers. If nothing else, it slows them down when going for a weapon. When the 'perp' relaxes his fingers, his arms usually jerk out warning the officer.

Cops couldn't just shoot the suckers, like we could. We didn't have a video camera anyway, let alone a dashboard video. While I'm not advocating any such violent act as shooting someone who has his/her hands up, one must be careful. The guy you let live today, may come back to haunt you. And, the premise is that they came to you, not the other way around. California law is most specific in this. You are allowed to use only such force to protect yourself as a reasonable man in a similar situation would use. I've concluded that the reasonable man they're referring to is Casper Milquetoast.

- The term can refer to someone who lets others win at his/her expense. People who behave in this way may become so completely submissive that others describe them as a “doormat”.
- The term can be used to describe a person of an unusually meek or submissive nature, or someone who is overly sensitive, timid, indecisive or cowardly.
- More rarely, it denotes someone who is chronically ill. Milk toast is light and easy to digest, therefore appropriate food for an invalid, or anyone with a “nervous stomach”.

You are free to take your pick, but to me, either the first or second apply to the individual I was describing.

Enough of the educating for a while, we need some action and adventure. Even on a small scale, it seemed that bad things happened in threes. They had a bit of trouble when they picked up that second tanker at Kettleman City, someone shot at them a few times. Bill and Ron fired back and the opponent must have decided that discretion was

the better part of valor. Then we had that minor dust 'em up with the three fellas in the pickup.

Taking the bodies up to Fresno was a really bad decision on my part and I take full responsibility. Regardless, five mega cab Dodge pickups set out from Fresno trying to follow the path of their three dead friends. It took them around four weeks to work their way to our place. We had less than 10 minutes warning, just enough time to get into our trench and start to spread out. Bill was the one on duty and he took out the right front tire of the lead pickup which slid to a stop, crossways in the road, blocking the way of the others.

They disembarked and spread out, using their M16 A1/A3s to lay down covering fire. Here's a list of situations where suppressive fire should be used:

- The enemy holds a position, such as a building or trench line, perhaps reinforced with sandbags, landmines, barbed or other obstacles.
- The enemy has a clear field of fire, so any force attacking them has very few places to take cover.
- To take the enemy's position, an attacker must be able to approach without getting shot and injured or killed. The enemy's ability to shoot at attackers must be reduced.

We were outnumbered, from appearances sake by 6:1. The actual number was 5:1 and we had an efficient sniper that wasn't receiving any cover fire. Sarah started taking them out, forcing them to take cover where none was available. When she stopped to reload, they tried a second time and we took down several using the Mozambique Drill. After shooting a few with three shots, we began to skip the first two and just try and shoot them in the head.

That failed and we went back to the Drill. They didn't realize that they were up against only M1As and that we had 3,000 rounds distributed evenly among us, all in magazines. They had anywhere from 210 to 300-rounds each, in magazines. However, they were using full-auto. If a person has to stop and reload magazines during a firefight, they're in a bad way. First, they have to go back and get the magazines they dropped on the ground; and, second, they have to reload them. Even with 10-round strippers, it takes a few minutes.

In five minutes the attacking force was reduced by half or more. They apparently realized they had a problem and slowed their advance. It didn't do them a lot of good for two reasons: the terrain was in our favor; and we had a sniper on the second floor of the house that could shoot like Alvin York. Sarah had that scope tuned in for exactly the right range and the zoom at max. When she couldn't find a target, she took out another truck tire. If an attacker tried to run, she'd shoot them in the exposed part from the shoulders up. She didn't hit with every shot she fired, but she wouldn't run out of Black Hills any time soon.

"No quarter, boys."

“What’s that mean?” Bill asked.

“El Degüello, no prisoners,” Ron replied.

I had safed my rifle and pulled my 1911, moving among the OpFor. Anyone who moved or made a sound, got one each 200gr +P Gold Dot right between the eyes. Ron participated but Bill didn’t. Was there reluctance on his part to carry out my no quarter order?

Literally, the Spanish expression means slitting throats. However, why get your knife dirty when you have a perfectly good M1911 loaded with Gold Dot? The military practice of no quarter was outlawed during the beginning of the 20th century. I suspected it would reappear in the days following WW III. Nobody counted how many men they shot. If they did, they didn’t bring it up. We gathered the bodies and put them in two trucks. Next we swapped tires and drove them south to I-5 and abandoned them on south-bound I-5 after pulling the tires.

The four remaining pickups were fitted with tires and pulled around back where they’d be out of sight. As an afterthought, we covered them with a large blue plastic tarp.

“That was some of the best shooting I’ve ever seen, Sarah.”

“Did it help?”

“Did it ever. It’s shame you had to shoot up those tires, but we still ended up with extras.”

It snowed the following day, wiping out the tracks down the road that led to the acreage. The people behind yesterday’s attack, provided they weren’t part of the attacking group, would know their people were missing but not much more. If they looked, they’d see our chimney smoke but wouldn’t know we were involved. If they went far enough, they might find the bodies.

Our first major combat had been true to form, hours of boredom interrupted by moments of stark terror. The fight lasted all of five minutes, if that long. It seemed to go on for hours because my brain sped up and many of the events seemed to almost occur in slow motion. Not only were all of the others moving in slow motion, I was too and I couldn’t will my rifle to move to the next target fast enough.

I had fired less than 3 magazines of cartridges, around 50 shots. Maybe we didn’t need to carry 30 magazines of .308. I had it figured that one .308 cartridge weighed around 0.9oz. Therefore a magazine, not counting the weight of the actual magazines was 18 ounces and counting the magazine, more like 24 ounces or 1.5 pounds. Multiply that by 30 and we were hauling around 45 pounds of ammo. None of those people had been to Pinnacle so we didn’t gain any body armor, but we did gain 30 M16s and around 9,000-

rounds of ammo still in the boxes. By final count, we had 300 magazines although they hadn't been evenly distributed among our late attackers.

I was reminded of something one of those PAW writers had asked about feeling bad that we nuked the Japanese. He asked, simply, *who bombed Pearl Harbor?*

We entered the nuclear age by bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and in the process saved 5 times as many lives as would have been lost if we'd been forced to invade. I'd seen estimates of a million Japanese and a half million Americans. Since it didn't happen, we'll probably never know.

From the reports, conversations and such on the amateur bands we had determined that the Chinese had used less than 200 nuclear weapons on us. They had gone for our infrastructure rather than only the military installations. They'd hit a fair portion of those, too, but, if you had a list of the 100 largest cities and added the large military bases, in terms of personnel, you had a pretty good list of where the weapons had been used. A few locations, because of their sprawl, had taken more than one hit, like Los Angeles. Greater LA had actually taken three, near as we could tell, one in the Valley, one over the downtown and a third down towards Long Beach. It might have been, as one ham suggested, a MIRV'd warhead.

As the speculation went, it was either a DF31 or a DF41 and it was MIRV'd. I'd read on Global Security that the DF-41 was only going to have a single 1mT warhead while the shorter range DF-31 could have 3 in the 100kT range. The power of these weapons has to be measured exponentially so a 200kT weapon isn't twice as powerful as a 100kT weapon. The difference in the results of using the weapons depended on whether it was an air burst or a ground burst. The weapons we used on Japan were air bursts resulting in minimal fallout. A ground burst damaged a smaller area and produced a lot of fallout. I figured they'd probably gone with air bursts on all of their weapons.

The distance from San Francisco to Fresno, as the crow flies is:
167 miles (269 km) (145 nautical miles)

Initial heading from San Francisco to Fresno:
East-southeast (113.8 degrees)

Initial heading from Fresno to San Francisco:
West-northwest (295.5 degrees)

Brought to you by the governments of Bali & Indonesia.

When I finally had a chance to just sit down and think about what happened it seemed surreal. Yes, I acquired firearms for just such an occasion together with ammo and extra magazines. Yes, I'd practiced regularly to be able to use the firearms effectively. I must have had a glassy eyed look because Ruth brought us both a cup of hot chocolate and asked if I wanted to talk about it.

“How can you ask that? You were there in the thick of it firing away and I know you took out several targets.”

“I kept thinking about Sarah back at the house, 8 plus months pregnant and what those animals would do to her if they got past us. I thought about Cindy who was also pregnant and standing shoulder to shoulder with Ron. I became furious, but it was a cold fury and improved my aim. It didn’t matter that I’d never pointed a gun at anyone before or that I’d never hurt anyone before. All that mattered was making sure they didn’t get past us.”

“I hadn’t thought about it that way Ruth. I’m just glad that we’ve gone up against a group of outsiders twice and walked away without anyone of us being hurt. Sooner or later one of us is going to get hurt as long as they keep coming.”

“What about that Pinnacle place?”

“The body armor company? They’re generally made to order after they have your exact measurements and you select degree of protection, color and what not. I don’t believe they’re open.”

“I wasn’t taking about buying some Sam. We could use a little five finger discount about now.”

Truth was we’d had several, think Costco, think Kettleman City. In for the ¢, in for the £, off to Fresno we went. It would have been easier on a sleigh, but we didn’t have a horse to pull one and we didn’t have any woods to dash through. The good news was that we only needed six sets. Since Sarah and Cindy were nearly the same size, we got two for Cindy. It was top of the line SOV-3000 NIJ level V that was rated against the M993 round.

The problem with Pinnacle was they didn’t grease any palms, hence Interceptor was better body armor, and any claims to the contrary are irrelevant. NIJ certified it then turned around and uncertified it. Gunny Ermey tested it and so did Richard Machowicz on Future Weapons. I’d trust Gunny Ermey, he lived down in Palmdale, home of the Skunkworks. What’s-his-name, the PAW author lived down there too. The body armor wasn’t a perfect fit, but it was as close as we could come under the circumstances.

Sarah’s baby, a boy, came early and they named him William. Willy was born right here in the house with Ruth and Cindy acting as midwives. There hadn’t been any complications or we have been up the creek. This would probably turn into a twice a year thing with two young women in the process of starting families; our daughter Sarah and Ron’s new wife Cindy. It was actually Cynthia but nobody had called her that since she was a young girl, unless she was in trouble over something.

Cindy wasn't originally from California and had moved to Fresno to take a job with a company only to be dumped not long after they moved. She ended up working for the contractor that Ron worked for and the rest is history. Although she hadn't shot a fire-arm before meeting Ron, she had been brought up in a family that had any number of rifles, shotguns and handguns. She was from Utah and a non-Mormon. Everyone in Utah got along well, she said, and nearly as many non-Mormons practiced the Mormon doctrine of having a one year's supply of food as did Mormons.

She said that while a poll indicated that about 61% of the population belonged to the LDS Church, the Church refuted that, claiming that 72% of the population was members of the Church. It didn't keep Salt Lake City from being a target; those Chinese were a Godless bunch. Her parents lived in St. George, down near Zion and she said they were probably ok. There had been no way to contact them when Ron and she got married.

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"It's been months, how goes the cleanup?"

"Mr. President, not as well as we hoped. Most of our soldiers aren't Engineers and this is really an engineering operation. We have anyone with training driving trucks driving the dump trucks and hauling the material from New York to New Jersey. We started in the north and are working our way south."

"Where was the warhead centered?"

"Over Wall Street, the financial district."

"So, you aren't even close to the major damage?"

"No sir, it will be a couple of years."

"What about the other cities?"

"On the west coast, San Francisco took one, Los Angeles took three and San Diego took one warhead. We're doing our best to reopen the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. San Diego won't be open for years and the Golden Gate is blocking the way into San Francisco Bay. The container port is inaccessible. Further north, we have similar problems with Portland and the Seattle area. Portland took one hit and Seattle four. Not only is all of Seattle gone, but many of the shipping facilities are out of commission."

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"That Willy is a spitting image of you at the same age, according to Sarah."

"I'd prefer if we call him Bill, or William, when he's bad. I can't say that I think much of calling him Willy."

“Sorry, I guess I was thinking of Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.”

“Gene Wilder?”

“Exactly.”

“I didn’t care much for that one Sam; I’m not a Gene Wilder fan.”

“Your choice, Bill or William?”

“I think Bill.”

Towards spring we’re going to be swimming in children. The house is getting over full; do you have any suggestions?”

“It would make sense to me to pull two of those double wide demos from the mobile home dealer and set them up here.”

We’ll need another generator the same size as the one we are using and a propane tank.”

“The generator is easy, they had more. There are several propane dealers in the area, according to Ron, and all we’d have to do is move a couple of empty tanks, install them and plumb them to the trailers. I’ve seen them assembling the halves of a mobile home once and they used a special rig that three of us could manage.”

“What could we do it this time of year? The ground is frozen, although probably not very deep. How do you propose hooking up two mobile homes to one generator? Do you plan on putting in separate propane tanks or just one?”

“We can get the propane tanks without going to Fresno. We look for places in the Yellow Pages and go until we have two tanks. Surely they must have a way to load them.”

“Unless the battery is dead or something.”

“We can jump them, or whatever it takes. We’ll probably find all the connection materials we need at the propane dealer who has the tanks. I think that bigger is better, but it all depends on what we can find. Then, we go after the generators, and while we’re at it we might just as well take all three of the remaining units. We’ll need oil and filters, too. Add to that the one gauge wire to power the two trailers and we’d be set. We could run water lines from the well and sewage lines to the septic tank. It would all be done before it warms up.”

“What about the trailers?”

“We have two semi tractors, we can hook up and pull one here one day and go after the next the following day. Hopefully, we’d get in and out before anyone noticed.”

“The way I see it is that’s a lot of what if’s and maybes. You assume you can find the tanks, a way to fill them, the necessary plumbing, nobody had taken the generators and you’ll find 1 gauge wire just laying around. Then you just drive into town, bold as brass, and haul off two mobile homes on two separate days.”

“That sums it up nicely, Sam.”

“Lord, I’ve created a monster.”

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Frankly, I had little faith they’d pull it off. However, a few days later they showed up with a lowboy that contained three 1,100 gallon tanks and three diesel generators. They had also loaded bulk motor oil, 12 drums worth and had several cases of filters. Instead of plumbing, they had high pressure propane hose and regulators. Add to those 3 100’-reels of 00 gauge wire, one white, one black and one green. I figured it was time to start thinking about digging the trenches.

“I’ll start the trenches tomorrow.”

“You’d better wait until we know where to put them, Dad. We’ll have to slip into town and check out the connections on the mobile homes. Then we can layout the locations with yellow string and mark where the pipes need to go. Give us a couple of days, going into Fresno could present a few challenges.”

“Not anything like what you’ll be up against when you go in and try to haul off two homes.”

“We have three to choose from, Cornerstone Realty, Foster Realty and Madison Homes.”

We had success in defending our home place but that wasn’t the same as going into Fresno and checking out two homes and then returning and hauling them away, one at a time. There would be little traffic in Fresno, if any, and you could hear those semis a mile off. They couldn’t help but attract attention. They decided to go to the location closest to the edge of town and check it out. It turned out to be a trailer park with lots of people. Eventually, they found what they were looking for, more or less. They found one place with three singlewide homes.

“This is even better, Sam. We can do it in one trip. We have the dimensions and can lay out the setup and start putting in the water and sewer lines. Once that’s done, we can pull the homes out in one trip and go back later for the leveling stands. We’ll need some

skirting, but we might be able to find that when we get the homes. Who knows, we might be able to get the stands at the same time.”

Bad Times – Chapter 8

“You’re going to need to get those generators set and plumbed into the second diesel tanker, too.”

“We’ll do it all before we go for the homes. Maybe we can slip in during the dark of night and be gone before anyone realizes what we’re up to.”

Before we could run water and sewer, we need the pipes and fittings. They laid out the locations and marked where the pipes would end. While I started the trenches, Ron and Bill slipped off and got the plumbing fixtures we needed. I told them to look for a new septic tank while they were at it. The family was growing, albeit slowly, and our 1,200 gallon septic tank wouldn’t be able to handle the increased volume. I suggested a large tank between 3-4,000 gallons and various connectors we’d need to connect 3 homes to one tank. I also suggested that they find more line for the drain field; we’d have to expand that.

In fact, to keep the system stable, we’d need to triple the size of the drain field if we tripled the size of the tank. Rather than worry about removing the old tank, I thought we’d just put the new tank in next to it and reroute the pipe from the house. I adjusted the trenches accordingly. When they returned, they had the largest tank they could find and it wasn’t as large as I’d suggested. We plumbed in the water from the well and rethought the septic system.

“Why don’t we leave the house connected to your old tank and put in this new tank for our two trailers?”

“Suits me. You boys will have to do the digging and I’ll help with drain field layout.”

“How deep do we put it?”

“As deep as it needs to be. How should I know? Just remember that water runs downhill and go from there. As far as the drain field goes, figure out what you think you need and then double it.”

“More is better?”

“I don’t know, but that was my thought.”

In general, it went like this. First they dug the hole for the septic tank and the trenches for the soil pipes from the homes. Next, they set the tank and connected the soil pipes. They dug a single trench from the tank, and connected it to a cross trench. From there, they dug five leech field trenches about 200’ feet long. The drain lines were put in and covered over and they connect the lines to the tanks using PVC pipe. Altogether, it took the better part of a week. Finally, they moved the diesel tanker and ran fuel lines to both

generators. They serviced the generators and fired them up to test them. Everything was copasetic. They were ready to go shopping for the mobile homes.

They slipped into town during late evening, parking the semis on 99. They checked out the dealer's warehouse and found sufficient stands for at least four homes and took them all. They also found several rolls of skirting. Their finds went into the mobile homes and they looked around until they found the door keys. Once they had checked everything out and knew they could simply hook onto the homes and haul them, they went back for the semis. Around oh-dark-thirty, they hooked up and beat feet.

The following day, they backed the homes into place and took the remainder of the day off. Bill explained that they'd first level the homes and then connect the gas, water and sewer. Finally, they'd connect the electric and be all set.

"You're forgetting something."

"What?"

"Your propane tanks aren't set in place and aren't plumbed in. Plus, they're empty. Do it the way you outlined, but remember that before you turn on the water, you have to set the tanks, connect them and fill them. After you have heat in the house, we'll open the water valves we installed at the well. While you're about it, you may just as well get two propane delivery trucks in case one goes bad."

"We used our spare tanker for the mobile homes. That puts us in a bind as far as diesel goes."

"So, look around and find two more of the double-tankers and fill them up at Kettleman City. Once we have everything established, I think we should say close to home for a while and only go out to refill the tankers."

"They have some propane down at Kettleman."

"You can go down there and empty their tanks, but I doubt they have more and 500 gallons per station."

"Beats going into Fresno."

All in all, it was easier to describe what we did than to do it. It took the better part of three weeks by the time the boys had everything done and the homes starting to heat. They opened the propane valves and fired up the generators and about two hours later, we opened the water valves and bled the pipes in the new mobile homes. They still weren't ready to occupy because they didn't have furniture or most of the things it takes to make a house a home.

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“What about the guns?”

“Which guns would that be sir?”

“The guns in the hands of the people, all those assault weapons and automatic pistols.”

“Oh, those guns; what about them?”

“Have you been collecting them?”

“Why would we? My oath is to support and defend the Constitution, as is yours. You want to throw out the 2nd Amendment, be my guest; my resignation will be on your desk in minutes. In fact your oath is to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution, if I’m not mistaken.”

“You don’t need you to tell me what my oath is, General, you’re dismissed.”

After about as long as it takes to type up a resignation, the General returned and laid his resignation on his desk and turned on his heel and left. He just sat there with his usual dumb look on his face, not believing that anyone would dare defy him.

By the time he collected himself and instructed that the General be brought to him, he had cleared Cheyenne Mountain and was headed south on I-25. He stopped at home, picked up his family and they left in his motorhome, which was equipped almost as well as Cheyenne Mountain. The General was particularly affectionate of the M14 rifle and he had several, new in the box National Match rifles, which had never been rendered semi-auto. The rifles had the barrels replaced at Quantico with 1:10 cryogenically treated parkerized Douglas chrome moly barrels. In addition, he had enough M118LR to last a lifetime and both Beretta M9s and M1911s. He had rounded out his collection with four HK416s and four Mossberg 590A1s. The General was loaded for bear, and then some. The only thing he lacked was the M107.

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They wanted to avoid Fresno with a passion and I couldn’t say as I blamed them. Nevertheless, it was about the only place they could go and get a good selection of furniture. I went along to ride shotgun and while I had my rifle, I was carrying the Mossy and, of course, my .45. The way I had it figured, I had long range, short to medium range and short range well covered. They weren’t looking to do any fancy decorating; they just needed beds and frames, bedroom suites, chests and beds for the kid’s rooms, dining and living room furniture.

They picked out top of the line stuff when it came to the mattresses because people spend $\frac{1}{3}$ of their lives lying on a mattress. I assumed it would take a few hours, but about 90 minutes later, we were headed home with no one the wiser, or so we thought.

Once home, they moved the furniture into the trailers, set up the beds and came back to the house.

“I think that does it.”

“Did you get flatware, china and a set of pots and pans?”

“No, we only went for furniture.”

We need those things plus kitchen utensils, coffee pots, toasters and maybe a microwave.”

“So now where?”

“Wally World. Don’t let us forget to get electric mixers and vacuum cleaners. We’ll need about a pickup load for each family.”

“Honey I hate to go into Fresno, make sure you don’t forget anything or you’re to have do without for a while.”

“Whatever Ron, but if you want to eat, we need to make the trip.”

“So you need the same stuff Sis?”

“We should look for baby cribs and cloth diapers if we can find them. We’ll need to make one more trip to get washers and dryers plus a freezer since they came with a refrigerator, stove and dish washer. We can pick up dishwasher soap there too.”

“I suppose that while you’re at it, you want to shop for baby clothes.”

“I hadn’t thought of it, but that’s a good idea.”

“Dad could you help us out here?”

“We’ll wait until tomorrow; your mother has supper going. Tomorrow, one of you go with the girls to Wally World and the other can go with me and we get the freezers, washers and dryers. Might as well get the best model we can find. I think we’ll hit the Sears warehouse after we go to the store and get the product numbers of the ones we want.”

We went all electric, limiting the propane use to the stoves hot water heater and furnace. While they had more electricity than they needed and in coming days, propane might be hard to come by. I was beginning to wonder where in hell the government was. We didn’t need them to bail us out and Fresno didn’t require cleanup, but surely they’d be taking a census or something. Moreover, we’d been very lucky that no one had been killed when we’d been attacked. A little law and order would be nice.

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Author's note:

I talk up PRI-G and PRI-D all of the time. I got this from someone who took a chance and believed me:

Hi Gary, I just did an unintended experiment. I was foolish and let my diesel sit for about 16 months. No start, added PRI-D, and using starting fluid got her running, and it stayed running. I just figured you might want to know since in your training lessons you use the stuff a lot.

Thanks again for the heads up,

Jim

I should have bought stock. The stuff will restore gas or diesel that is so bad it almost won't burn back to refinery new. Try it, you might like it too. - TOM

◦

Meanwhile, the General and his wife turned off I-25 at Walsenburg and proceeded west on 160. They followed 160 until they got to Flagstaff the following day. In Flagstaff, they joined I-40 westbound and followed it to Barstow. In Barstow, he switched to route 58 and took it all the way to Bakersfield where he picked up 99 for the last leg of their journey. The General was originally from Fresno and all the data they had gathered at NORAD indicated that Fresno had received nominal fallout and was habitable. A flyover had revealed very few people on the FLIR.

The flyover was totally illegal, in a sense. SCOTUS had ruled in *Kyllo v. United States*, 21Jun01 533US27 that the government had to have a search warrant under the Fourth Amendment before they could use FLIR equipment to search a home from the outside. However, the data wasn't being used to create probable cause for a search warrant and what the people didn't know couldn't hurt the government.

As the General and his wife drove those last few miles from Bakersfield to Fresno, he wondered how many of his relatives he would be able to find. His wife's family was all from Denver.

◦

"Are we all set?"

"Until the next bunch of bad guys shows up, I think so. Do you mind if I ask a question Dad?"

“Go for it Ron.”

“Why in the name of God would China attack us? The whole idea of our having the Minuteman III missiles and Ohio class submarines was to make it too expensive for any enemy to attack us.”

“I honestly don’t know the answer. I do know that we were ready for something because it takes over 24 hours to load the food aboard an Ohio class submarine. To sortie our entire navy had to have taken a month of preparations. We’ve discussed this before and I don’t know anything more now than I did then. The last time we went at this alert level was on 9/11 when the military went to Threatcon Delta. There are five THREATCON levels:

- a. THREATCON NORMAL. Applies when there is no discernible terrorist activity. Under these conditions, only a routine security posture, designed to defeat the criminal threat, is warranted. The minimum THREATCON for US Army commands is NORMAL.
- b. THREATCON ALPHA. Applies when there is a general threat of possible terrorist threat activity against personnel and/or installations, the nature and extent of which is unpredictable, and circumstances do not justify full implementation of THREATCON BRAVO measures. However, it may be necessary to implement certain measures from higher THREATCONs resulting from intelligence received or as a deterrent. Commands must be capable of maintaining THREATCON ALPHA measures indefinitely, with only limited impact on normal operations.
- c. THREATCON BRAVO. Applies when an increased or more predictable terrorist threat exists. Commanders must be capable of maintaining the measures of this THREATCON for several weeks without causing undue hardship to personnel, substantially affecting operational capabilities, or aggravating relations with local authorities and members of the local civilian or host nation community.
- d. THREATCON CHARLIE. Applies when an incident occurs or intelligence indicates some form of terrorist action against personnel and/or facilities is imminent. Implementation of THREATCON CHARLIE measures for more than a short period probably will create hardships for personnel and affect the peacetime activities of units and personnel.
- e. THREATCON DELTA. Implementation applies in the immediate area where a terrorist attack has occurred or when intelligence indicates terrorist action against a specific location is likely. Implementation of THREATCON DELTA normally occurs for only limited periods of time over specific, localized areas. Commands cannot sustain THREATCON DELTA for extended periods without causing significant hardships for personnel and substantial reductions in capability to perform normal peacetime missions.”

“How does that compare to Defense Conditions?”

“First I need to say that they renamed Threatcons to FPCONs which stands for Force Protection Condition. The decision to implement a particular THREATCON is a command decision which should be based on an assessment of the threat, vulnerability of

personnel or facilities, criticality of personnel or facilities, availability of security resources, impact on operations and morale, damage control considerations, international relations, and the potential for US Government actions to trigger a terrorist response. Frequently, information concerning terrorism is limited to general descriptions of terrorist capabilities and intentions. Often, specific tactics and targets are not identified until it is too late to implement deterrent measures or until after an attack has taken place. For this reason, the absence of specific information concerning the immediate terrorist threat should not preclude implementing a higher THREATCON and/or additional security measures when general information indicates an increased vulnerability or heightened risk to personnel and/or facilities.

“In the event of a national emergency, a series of seven different alert Conditions (LERTCONs) can be called. The 7 LERTCONs are broken down into 5 Defense Conditions (DEFCONs) and 2 Emergency Conditions (EMERGCONs).

“Defense readiness conditions (DEFCONs) describe progressive alert postures primarily for use between the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the commanders of unified commands. DEFCONs are graduated to match situations of varying military severity, and are numbered 5,4,3,2, and 1 as appropriate. DEFCONs are phased increases in combat readiness. In general terms, these are descriptions of DEFCONs:

“DEFCON 5 Normal peacetime readiness

DEFCON 4 Normal, increased intelligence and strengthened security measures

DEFCON 3 Increase in force readiness above normal readiness

DEFCON 2 Further Increase in force readiness, but less than maximum readiness

DEFCON 1 Maximum force readiness.

“EMERGCONs are national level reactions in response to an ICBM (missiles in the air) attack. By definition, other forces go to DEFCON 1 during an EMERGCON.

“DEFENSE EMERGENCY: Major attack upon US forces overseas, or allied forces in any area, and is confirmed either by the commander of a unified or specified command or higher authority or an overt attack of any type is made upon the United States and is confirmed by the commander of a unified or specified command or higher authority.

“AIR DEFENSE EMERGENCY: Air defense emergency is an emergency condition, declared by the Commander in Chief, North American Aerospace Defense Command. It indicates that attack upon the continental United States, Canada, or US installations in Greenland by hostile aircraft or missiles is considered probable, is imminent, or is taking place.”

“So when Obama said we had an Air Defense Emergency, it was shorthand for missiles in the air?”

“That’s right Ron. Speaking of him, I wonder what happened to him and if he survived, why he is still hiding.”

“Unless he makes a radio broadcast Dad, we may never know. Are those Threatcon levels the basis for the Homeland Security threat levels?”

“Nobody knows what the criteria are for the DHS. The specific government actions triggered by different threat levels are not always revealed to the public, although the government does provide general guidance for civilians and federal agencies. Typical actions include increasing police and other security presence at landmarks and other high-profile targets, more closely monitoring international borders and other points of entry, ensuring that emergency response personnel are ready, and, in some cases, deploying members of the National Guard and State Guard to assist local law enforcement on security details. In and of itself, that’s interesting because State Guards are not under the authority of the President and aren’t subject to federal duty.”

“Then how come we always seem to know what caused the increased threat level?”

“Because someone in the government has a big mouth, I suppose.”

“There’s motorhome coming down the road.”

“How many passengers?”

“I only see two, a man and a woman.”

“Move in behind them and we’ll stop them Bill.”

Click, click.

“Ron, I’ll take my shotgun and you take your rifle. We’ll stop them right in front of our driveway. I guess I’ll just stand in the middle of the road and flag them down.”

“Bill, how fast is he moving?”

“About 10mph.”

“What’s he doing?”

“Looking around like he’s lost.”

“I’ll flag him down Bill and you move up to cover them in case they do anything funny.”

Click, click.

I already had a round in the chamber of my Mossy and it would only take sliding the tang safety forward to get the ball rolling. I walked out almost to the center of the road

and held up my left hand. The motorhome slowed and stopped, about 10' in front of me. The driver, a guy about my age got out and held his hands where I could see them.

"Excuse me, I seem to be lost. I think I went one turnoff too far."

"You from around here?"

"Born and raised, but when I left for West Point, I only came back to visit."

"Are you an officer?"

"I guess you could say I was an officer; I handed in my resignation to the egomaniac in the White House. I hope you didn't vote for him, being you're holding that Mossberg."

"Nope, I voted Republican, the lesser of two evils."

"My name is Eugene Brown and the lady in the motorhome is my wife Shirley."

"Sam George. The fella to your right is my son Ron and the man behind you is my son-in-law Bill."

He turned slightly to see Bill and noticed that he, too, was carrying a M1A. When he turned, I noticed the M1911 in his IWB holster because his jacket pulled open.

"Maybe we should be going."

"Would you care for some coffee?"

"Why yes, thank you. I take it you noticed that I'm armed."

"M1911?"

"Right, I like it better than the M9. Just so you know I have M14s, 590A1s, M9s and HK416s."

"Plenty of ammo?"

"I hope so."

"Man after my own tastes except I prefer the Browning Hi-Power."

"Good pistol."

"Well, hop in and follow me to the house. Bill, you resume guard duty and Ron, come with me."

We returned to the house and the man and his wife got out.

“Shirley, this is Sam George and his son Ron. The fella you didn’t see standing behind me was his son-in-law Bill.”

“I’m pleased to meet you Sam, Ron”

“Come into the house and meet my wife Ruth and daughter Sarah. The pregnant one is Ron’s wife Cindy.”

“Ruth, this is Eugene Brown and his wife Shirley. He said he was an officer in the military and just recently retired.”

“I’m please to meet both of you, coffee?”

“Yes, please.”

“Which Branch of the service were you in, the Army?”

“Yes.”

“Field grade commander?”

“General officer; in fact, until I resigned I was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Staff.”

“Why did you resign?”

“The jerk gave me hell for not picking up the guns.”

“What guns?”

“Your guns, among others; he sat on his butt in Cheyenne Mountain since the attack and all of a sudden got worried about people having firearms. I see you’re well-armed, that’s good.”

“Got a few. Some of them belong to either the National Guard or the Army. We were attacked a while back by people armed with stolen A3s. We kept their guns when we disposed of the bodies.”

“You seem to have a nice setup; are you a prepper?”

“Never thought of myself as one, but I suppose I am.”

“Would you folks care for a cinnamon roll, they’re fresh.”

“Thank you Ruth that would be good.”

Bad Times – Chapter 9

“You’re welcome to park your motorhome here for a while. All of our generators are rated at 200amps prime power. It shouldn’t take too much to get you hooked into the water and the sewage. Then, you could use one of our pickups to check the town out. We have a spare singlewide mobile home. You have relatives here?”

“I did. I was wondering on our way here if I’d be able to find them.”

“I don’t suppose you have an M107, some LAW rockets or a few hand grenades, do you?”

“No, but I know where we should be able to get some.”

“Where, Barstow?”

“Yes, you didn’t go down there already?”

“General, I didn’t want some Marine sharpshooter shooting me.”

“Sam, call me Gene. I still have a dress uniform and ACUs, we could make a trip and requisition some if you really want them.”

“I thought you had to go through a bunch of paperwork.”

“Most times you do; can you see a Marine Corporal refusing to give a 4-star Army General anything he wants?”

“I don’t suppose it’s likely.”

“Make up a list and we go down there. Shirley, do we want to park the motorhome here for a few days?”

“I think so, Gene.”

“You’ll stay for supper won’t you?”

“We wouldn’t want to impose Ruth.”

“You wouldn’t be Shirley; I have a huge ham in the oven. How about having acorn squash with that?”

“It sounds good.”

“Sarah, would you get four squash out of the cold cellar?”

“Sure mom.”

“Ron, get an extension to the sewer pipe started. We’ll hook them into your generator and run a garden hose for water. Get a new hose out of the pole barn.”

“I’m on it.”

“Your children live at home?”

“Ron lived in Ohio and Bill and Sarah in Texas. Bill lost his job and they moved out here a little before the war. Same thing happened to Ron and we put them up in their old bedrooms. They found jobs here and were just getting back on their feet when the balloon went up. My job got cut and I took a golden handshake while Ruth got laid off with no benefits.”

“Tough economy and having China nuke us didn’t help much. We have troops doing cleanup in the cities that were nuked, but that will take years. I’ve got 33 years in and I couldn’t take any more of the crap. Bad part is I probably won’t see a dime of my pension. However, I had some investments that should cover our needs.”

“What kind of investments could you possibly make that would do you any good now?”

“Precious metals. We’ve been buying them since the early ‘80s. Not much at a time, but it added up over the years.”

“Excuse me; General do you have a power cord for your motorhome to plug into power?”

“Yes I do Ron. Do you want me to move the motorhome so it can reach your generator?”

“If it wouldn’t be too much trouble, could you please?”

“Let me get my coat.”

“Where do you want it?”

“Right about here if your extension cord is long enough. That would position you to drain your waste tank and let you connect the water hose.”

“I back it into place.”

“Thank you. Where is the water connection?”

“I show you once we get it moved.”

The General backed the motorhome into place and Ron handed him the water hose. He connected it and pulled out a very heavy extension cord with 4 prongs. Ron connected it to the generator and they used a piece of flexible dryer hose to connect the waste outlet to the soil pipe now sticking up. Meanwhile it was time for me to pull guard duty so I bundled up and got my rifle.

“Where are you going Sam?”

“Guard duty Gene. We pull 4 on and 8 off.”

“I’ll walk with you if I may, I’d like to visit for a while.”

“Get one of your M14s and loaded magazines if you have them.”

“Give me one minute.”

I went back in the house and got him a radio. I didn’t figure he’d pull the whole shift with me, but he should have the equipment.

“Is seven magazines enough?”

“If it isn’t, I can share.”

“How many do you carry?”

“Fifteen for the rifle and five for my pistol.”

“That must be heavy.”

“They are Gene, but would you rather have it and not need it or need it and...”

“Not have it. I see what you mean. I’ll load up a few more of the magazines I have. When I acquired the weapons I have, I bought them four at a time, except for the M14s. It was rare to find a new M14 let alone four that were select fire. I worked a deal with a Command Sergeant Major I knew from when he was a Corporal and I was his Platoon Leader. He had a problem he needed my help resolving and more or less paid for it by giving me the M14s.”

“You said you wanted to talk.”

“Could you bring me up to date on what’s happened in the area since the war?”

For the next two hours, I slowly brought Gene from the EAS announcement to the present day. It was then his turn because I wanted to know how much of the government remained, etc.

“We actually had about six hours advance notice that something bad was going to happen, but no specifics. We’d picked up the Chinese subs and as a precaution, he moved the Congress to the Greenbrier, some of the cabinet to Mt. Weather and flew himself and the Joint Chiefs to Colorado Springs, activating Cheyenne Mountain. We issued orders for any naval assets still in port to sortie and base units to hunker down against a possible nuclear war. As you may know, the Minuteman IIIs are kept on a 2-minute alert status and the boomers aren’t. Therefore an order went out for the boomers to reposition and begin getting things in order so they could launch the D-5s.”

“The EAS messages, they came from Cheyenne Mountain? What was that bit where he acted like he’d been interrupted and had to go?”

“Pure stagecraft, perhaps to throw off whoever was attacking. By then, we knew it was the Chinese and the boomers in the Atlantic Fleet had been ordered to standby. Two boomers of the Pacific fleet and all of the Minuteman IIIs would be used on China. All of the Minuteman IIIs carried a single Peacekeeper warhead of 300kT, the M87 warhead on an Mk 21 Avco reentry vehicle. The D-5s carry 8 warheads, each with a yield of 100kt.”

“So we retaliated with over 800 warheads?”

“About 2 or 3 to 1, Sam. That still left us with 12 loaded boomers and 20 of the B-2s.”

“What about the Middle East?”

“We won’t be importing oil for a long time.”

“What about our overseas troops?”

“We evacuated as many as we could, but we had a lot in Korea and some of them weren’t evacuated until the war was over. It only lasted about an hour, you know.”

“Did Russia join in?”

“No. We assumed that they’d wait until it was over and pick a country to invade. What actually happened was China sent a few missiles their way and they retaliated. Then, when the radiation was down to acceptable levels, Russia moved against China. Anyway, I knew that if we ordered the troops to begin picking up firearms, we’d have a revolt on our hands and being a pro-gun advocate myself, I resigned on the spot.”

“Did you have a lot of family here?”

“My parents are both dead and I was an only child. I should have some cousins and maybe an aunt or uncle left; hard to say.”

“You’re relieved Dad.”

“Have we been talking that long?”

“Four hours. Mom kept the food warm for the two of you and Sarah and Cindy have helped Mrs. Brown get the motorhome setup for them to sleep in. She’s in the house visiting with Mom.”

“I think if I get some hot food in me, I should sleep for 24 hours.”

“You didn’t stop much on the way?”

“I drove straight through. It was around 1,300 miles the way I came and took around 25 hours. The tanks on the motorhome hold 100-gallons and I had 25 five-gallon cans of diesel. Damned thing only gets around 6mpg, especially in the mountains. As a rule, most average full-size motorhomes achieve about 6 to 9 mpg, and a few rare exceptions can go as high as 10, 11 or 12 mpg. However, we drove through mountains until we got to Flagstaff. I was afraid we’d have to try and find diesel.”

“If you had, how would you have pumped it?”

“Using the generator in the motorhome.”

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I figured the generator was probably propane fueled and ran off a propane bottle. I asked the next day and learned it was diesel fueled and ran off the diesel tank using its own separate electric fuel pump. I also learned that the motorhome had been modified and the top was covered with 12v solar panels. Inside of the motorhome were three batteries that could provide power to totally empty the fuel tank before they went dead. The motorhome, I was told, had backup 12v lighting.

Gene said that the motorhome was great for vacations, but a bit cramped for long term use. I asked if he’d prefer to have the singlewide mobile home. We could work a swap, of sorts. If he’d help us get what we wanted from MCLB, Barstow, he could move into the third home. He said that he’d take it under advisement. However, as far as MCLB, Barstow was concerned, was tomorrow too soon?

“Boys, I need you to make a list of things we want from Barstow. I had in mind more ammo, some of those LAW rockets and maybe some hand grenades. Anything you can think of?”

“A belt fed machinegun would be nice, Dad.”

“Which caliber?”

“I don’t care, .30 or .50 caliber. I don’t want a light machinegun.”

“Ok, an M240B or an M2HB.”

“Bill, anything you want?”

“What kind of grenades were you talking about Sam? I mean there are smoke grenades, riot control grenades, concussion grenades and fragmentation grenades.”

“I was thinking about an assortment Bill. Each has a specific purpose, so we should have something for every occasion.”

“Then no, nothing I can think of. I’d go for a Squad Automatic Weapon if they were more reliable. Unfortunately from what I’ve read, the military has problems with them.”

“You boys make up a list?”

“Here you go.”

“I’ll discuss the SAW with Gene.”

“Gene, here’s the list the boys made up and here is the one I made up. Bill had a question about the SAW. He seems to think they aren’t any good.”

“They’ve improved them through a PIP, Sam. However, Special Forces, especially the SEALs, use the Mk46 Mod 0, an improved, lightweight version of the SAW. I’d get a couple of those plus Mk48 Mod 0, same thing in 7.62, one medium and one heavy machinegun.”

“You didn’t put down quantities. How much of each item do you want?”

“I assume that this is a one shot deal, Gene. Let’s say a lifetime supply.”

“You’ll need some trailers.”

“We have three of the largest enclosed trailers U-Haul has.”

“I take your lists and type them up as a requisition. I plan on going down there tomorrow. It’s over 250 miles and will take about 4 hours going down. We should plan on leaving around 6am. Once we’re loaded up, it will probably take around 5 hours to get home. Figure about 11-12 hours total. It’s a shame you don’t have ACUs.”

“We have BDUs, will they work?”

“I suppose I could say that you were inactive reserves or former soldiers who I commandeered to help me out.”

“I was Army, E-5. You can ride with me. A 4-star has an NCO or higher for a driver, right?”

“Usually a Lieutenant and sometimes a Captain; but sometimes a Master Sergeant or higher. Under the circumstances, I’d be using whoever was available.”

“What we have is Chocolate-Chip Camouflage, the stuff they used in the First Gulf War.”

“Hell that will work well.”

o

“Neither of us knows anything about being soldiers, Dad.”

“That’s ok, with a 4-star in charge, everyone will be too busy saluting him. We’ll take all three pickups, each pulling a U-Haul. I’ll drive Gene in the lead vehicle and you two will bring up the rear. He took the lists and is typing up a requisition on his computer. It’s not ordinary, but I doubt anything has been ordinary since the war. He’s going to requisition two of the Mk46 Mod 0; the improved version of the SAW used by Special Forces, like the SEALs, and two of the Mk48 Mod 0 version of the same in 7.62.”

“The medium and heavy machineguns are crew served, right?”

“Yes and no. If they’re fixed, like in a Hummer ring mount, they’re a one man deal. I don’t plan on having portable machine guns other than the SAWs.”

We ended up staying up later than usual so the chevrons could be sewn on the uniforms. I wanted them to be just right and after, we washed the uniforms to rid them of the new look. A rap came on the door at 5:55am and I invited Gene in for coffee.

“Sewed them on and washed the uniforms?”

“Yes because we didn’t want them to look new.”

“I got to thinking last night and you probably could have gotten by with just the collar insignia pins. Where did you get the helmets?”

“They’re PASGT which we got at the surplus store along with the vests. All of it dates well to the First Gulf War.”

“And you just happened to have them, right?”

“After we went to town last night, we did. The boys got everything to match the color of our BDUs.”

“Well Master Sergeant George, are we ready to go?”

“Yes sir, General.”

“I spent some time on the list and decided we’d see if we could get them to headspace extra barrels for the Mk46, Mk48 and the M240B. They only come with one pre-headspaced barrel. We don’t want to have to come back in case they run that requisition up to Colorado Springs.”

“Will they do that before they fill it?”

“Unlikely, communications are poor at best.”

“We three don’t have military ID cards.”

“I do and that’s all that counts.”

The General had padded our list and had two of each type machinegun listed with 3 spare barrels each. He had added a few things we didn’t have on the list, M203s, 40mm grenades, an Mk19 Mod 3 and lots of ammo. Most of the requisition was for ammo, grenades and he requested very little in the way of actual weapons. On the way down, he told me he had a story ready if he needed it, he had just come from Los Angeles where the cleanup was being slowed by gangs because the soldiers were short on weapons and ammo.

“Why would a 4-star General take care of something like that? That sounds more like something a Major would be detailed to handle.”

“Before the war, I would have agreed Sam. Now it’s very difficult to get one service to part with equipment to another service branch. I’m going in full bore as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. About the only person they could check with is someone else on the Joint Chiefs.”

“And if they do?”

“I think they’ll back my play if they’re convinced it is really me. About the only thing the Joint Chiefs and Mr. Obama agree on is that we’re all Americans, but I wonder about him. To a man, everyone hates his guts. I made sure that my secretary passed out copies of my resignation to the other Chiefs. You do know that he enacted his powers under the National Emergency provisions before the bombs even hit, don’t you?”

“I hadn’t heard that, but I’m not all that surprised Gene. It all really started with FDR and ever since the government just keeps grabbing more power. Have you ever read *Unintended Consequences* by John Ross?”

“Yeah, wasn’t Henry Bowman something?”

“Interesting solution he came up with, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, but it left me wondering, do Jews raise hogs?”

“You cannot raise hogs on Israeli soil but there are farmers who do it. I can’t tell you any more than that Sam.”

“I’ve noticed that my GPS sometimes works and sometimes doesn’t. Do you know why?”

“Not exactly, but it has been like that since the war. The GPS satellites can sense nuclear detonations and perhaps they were overloaded. In any event, the Air Force Space Command hasn’t been able to launch any new GPS satellites since the war so the system is bound to fail.”

“I noticed that you’re not carrying your M9.”

“Patton carried what he wanted and so am I. I don’t like the M9. I have a Para Ordnance P-14 .45. If we get into a fight, they’ll see my .45 and assume I have 7 shots. However, I topped the magazine off and the pistol has 15 rounds. Between the two spares and the one in the pistol, I have 43-rounds available before I need to switch to my M14.”

“Do you think Patton would have like the M14 as much as he liked the Garand?”

“Why not, the M14 is just an improved Garand with a 20-round magazine. He wouldn’t have agreed to make it select fire, if you ask me.”

“And yet, all of your rifles are select fire.”

“I never use them for full auto because the second shot is way high and the third shot is aimed at the moon. I suppose that since I’ve resigned, I should switch them to semi-auto only.”

“Afraid of the BATFE?”

“Who isn’t? You obviously read John Ross’s book, can you say you like them?”

“We never had any NFA firearms until we were attacked and recovered those military A3s.”

“Did you clean them up before you put them away?”

“Down to bare metal using carburetor cleaner. Man, they were filthy. We used Breakfree CLP to lubricate them so they should be good for a few hundred rounds.”

"I got those HK416s when I saw the results of the dust test. That was in the fall of '07."

"Semi or full-auto?"

"Select fire, bought them with my own dime. I tried to get some of those XM-8s, but H&K wouldn't sell them to me."

"We're here."

"You pull up to the gate and I'll do the talking."

"Right."

"Marine, I'm here with a requisition."

"Who are you sir?"

"General Eugene Brown, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I need to talk to your commanding officer."

"One moment sir, I'll call."

"He walks like he's got a cob up his behind."

"The Corps rides their people pretty hard."

"Sir, if you'll provide me with your military ID card, I can clear you."

"Here you go, just what I told you."

"Yes sir. Pull your vehicles to the second building on the left and someone will meet you."

"That guy's a full bird. I think I know his name, Enzor. Started out as Army enlisted."

"Enzor, good to see you again."

"Excuse me sir, do I know you?"

"I was your Company Adjutant, back when you were a Sergeant in the Army. I'm Brown, remember now?"

"I can't say that I do General. Help you?"

"I've got a requisition here to help out those folks trying to clean up LA. I said that I'd run interference for them. Got it typed up as a requisition on the only form I had available."

Bad Times – Chapter 10

“Yes sir, what do you need?”

“Read the form Colonel. Let me know if you have any trouble with those items I want to requisition.”

“Only problem I can see is the extra headspaced barrels for the Mk46s, Mk48s and the M240Bs. Might take an armorer a while to do those.”

“Why don’t you get him started and we’ll standby while your people load our trailers and pickups. As you can see, we’re doing with a lot of make do, civilian vehicles and U-Haul trailers. Any other problems?”

“I hope you have enough space General.”

“Pack it in tight Colonel; we’ll make do, like we have been. You can put the weapons in the passenger compartments of the pickups.”

“Do you really know that Colonel?”

“No, but I read his bio so I know a little bit about him. He’s was a real up and comer. Went to Ranger School, Jump School, yada, yada. Went to college and then through OCS. Worked his way up to full Colonel and probably was on a promotion list for Brigadier General.”

“My men will work on it General, could I interest you in some coffee?”

“If you have an NCO who can do the same for my men, sure.”

“Sergeant, get your men and I’ll hook you up with one of my Gunnery Sergeants.”

“Thank you sir.”

o

“So that movie was just a lot of crap, huh?”

“Yeah, a guy like that Gunny Highway wouldn’t last 10 minutes in the Corps. He had a good message, improvise, adapt and overcome, but the rest of the movie was pure imagination. He was still reliving Heartbreak Ridge which occurred during September and October ’51 and he participates in the invasion of Grenada. Hell, he would have had to have 35 years in, minimum. I doubt the Corps would have let him stay past 30 years.”

“The General looked us up and reactivated us under some damned national Emergency order.”

"I wondered, you're carrying .45s and M14 rifles. The military still uses M14s but the Army rarely does."

"Gunny, are you familiar with the militia?"

"Something to do with the Constitution?"

"Yes and there's a law defining it. I was in Desert Storm and these boys were in Iraqi Freedom. We were all out of the service and done with inactive reserve. Along comes the General like he pulled our names out of a hat and said he needs our help to get some matériel for the cleanup people down in LA. Has something to do with Article 1, section 8 of the Constitution. He also cited 10USC311, which is the Militia Act of 1903. We had to provide our own weapons, ammo and uniforms, in the beginning."

"Aren't you a little old for a militia call up?"

"Only by about 11 years, I'm 56. On the other hand, I had more active duty time and more experience than these two yard birds."

"What the hell is that on those rifles, a bayonet lug?"

"Yeah and damned hard to come by in the PRK; matter of fact, they're illegal. You ought to get a look at the bayonets we have, right off the 1903 Springfield rifle, 16" M1942. I see where the Corps went to a new bayonet."

"Right it's a combination bayonet and fighting knife."

"I was telling you about our uniforms Gunny. This is what they wore in Desert Storm."

"I enlisted right after that Sergeant."

"Call me Sam, Gunny."

"So, is that General you're with the Chief of Staff of the Army?"

"That's what he says. Said he'd been in Cheyenne Mountain with his highness until recently. Couldn't stand him and said that none of the other members of the Joint Chiefs could either."

"We don't get much information."

"Well, I can tell you a little. China apparently attacked with up to 200 warheads. We retaliated by a three to one margin. They also attacked Russia with a few and Russia retaliated. That thing in the Middle East went to hell, but I don't know how it ended up, probably the whole area is a glass coated parking lot. All of our capital ships and their

escorts sortied before the balloon went up and they're safe. Same goes for our 14 boomers and 12 of them still have full loads. I suppose they'll have to put in somewhere like Pearl to replenish."

"Gunny."

"Sir."

"Their machineguns are ready; would you get them and put them in their trucks?"

"Aye sir."

o

Aye Aye Sir vs. Yes Sir

Aye Sir is a Naval response indicating that an order has been received, is understood, and will be carried out immediately. In operational situations, this is usually shortened to simply "aye." In contrast to "Aye Aye sir," a response of "Yes Sir" usually indicates that the person understands but is contemplating performing the ordered task at a later time or date.

o

"Don't get the barrels mixed up. They're tagged by the gun serial number; if you mix them up, your headspace will be wrong."

"Thanks Gunny."

"No sweat. I checked and everything you requisitioned is packed in one of the three trailers or in the trucks. Drive carefully, you're overloaded."

"It's mostly downhill from here."

"That's what I meant; don't burn your brakes out."

"Is there anywhere we can top off our tanks?"

"Follow me and I'll show you the motor pool pump."

o

"Kind of pushing your luck weren't you Sam?"

“General, you just requisitioned several thousand dollars of weapons and matériel. I only got a few gallons of gasoline. That Gunny is okay and he may have wondered if we hadn’t asked.”

“How heavily are we loaded down?”

“I think your estimate of five hours might be low, I’m going to limit our speed to 50mph so it could easily run six hours.”

It took most of the estimated six hours. I called the gals on the ham radio and more or less gave them a running commentary where we were, more by familiar landmarks than by actual location. We pulled in around 5:45pm. We parked the trucks and trailers and went to the house to clean up. Dinner wasn’t quite ready so I offered Gene a drink.

“What do you have?”

“Bourbon, Rye, Scotch, Gin, Vodka and good Tequila.”

“Bourbon rocks.”

“I think I’m going for some Tequila. You boys help yourself, there’s also beer.”

“I thought that beer was only good for about 4 months.”

“Yeah, it’s losing some of its flavor, but it will be gone before it’s undrinkable.”

“How long will it take to get us set up in a mobile home?”

“All you need is furniture and we prefer late night shopping for that.”

“Is there much looting going on?”

“A little but it’s mostly salvage.”

“Is there a difference?”

“We think so. Looting is taking something you don’t need from someone who has it simply because you want it and think it has value. Salvage is the recovery of unclaimed/abandoned property that you’d be willing to pay for if anyone were there. I know it’s a pretty thin line, but we salvage and don’t loot. If someone had something I wanted I’d offer to buy it or trade for it, but I wouldn’t take it just because I had the bigger gun.”

“What did you get from those attackers?”

“We got thirty M16A3s, magazines and ammo; plus a few miscellaneous handguns. I planned to keep them for trade goods. We can meet at least 90 percent of our needs,

but need a few things we can't make or grow like toilet tissue, coffee, wheat and rice; just to name a few. We recovered around 300 rounds per M16 and 7 magazines.

"Most of the 5.56 I requisitioned was those 200 round belts for the Mk46. But I also got 50 cases of M855. I have four guns than can shoot it and we could use some of it for trade goods to the people who get guns and ammo from you."

"We have to be careful on that, I wouldn't to sell a guy a rifle and be looking down the rifle the next day when he decided to clean us out. Tomorrow, we'll look for a pickup. Would a Dodge Ram 3500 with the Cummins turbo diesel be ok?"

"Extended cab?"

"Or mega cab."

"Damned right it would."

"Have to add an auxiliary tank if we can find one, Warn winch, second alternator and maybe an in the bed fuel tank. Oh, a rifle rack behind the front seat and a second in front of the back window."

"Big boy toy? That would run you sixty if you could find one."

"Finding it won't be a problem and there probably won't be a salesman standing there with his hand out."

"You sure we can do it in one day?"

"Yes I am. We'll make the late night furniture shopping trip and you'll be in it the next day."

"Where do you get the propane?"

"We have a delivery truck out back holding 3,000-gallons. Those gasoline/diesel tankers have been rigged to supply diesel directly to the generators. That's why this place looks a bit like a truck stop; we have a lot of diesel. One genset running at full power would use 4.2gph times 8,766 hours or about 37,000 gallons a year. You can see 4 tankers, one each plus a spare. We'll have to get another tanker for you."

"Where do you get your fuel?"

"Truck stop on I-5 at Kettleman City; there must be 7 stations there, all selling gas and diesel. Even sell a little propane and we've emptied some of their tanks so maybe that's where we'll get your tank."

"I've meaning to ask you about that Sam. Everything is so... exposed. One stray bullet and you could lose a tanker or a propane tank. Wouldn't it be a good idea to install berms or something?"

"Earthen berms or concrete walls?"

"Whatever would stop bullets and be easiest to build."

"Probably concrete walls around 12' tall and anchored about 3'-4' in the ground. I'm not sure; I'll take to the boys."

o

"You want to do what?"

"Build some kind of berm and set the propane and diesel tanks behind it. We should probably move the farm tank too."

"That's going to be a lot of plumbing."

"Are you saying you can't do it?"

"We can do it, it will just take time."

"Good, we'll go get Gene and Shirley some furniture and move them in. Then I think we should start building the berm. Dig it down 4' and we'll form it for 12' above the ground. Will Ready Mix be a problem?"

"That depends on whether we can find loaded trucks. If we can, it's no big deal. If we can't, we'll need power for the batch plant."

"See what you can do to get finished up on their house tomorrow. We'll do the shopping tomorrow night. Gene and I will get the pickups and trailers unloaded. So we'll have them to use when we go furniture shopping. We'll also need a freezer, washer and dryer, maybe I'll just take the Sears floor models if the dryer is electric."

"We should get some kind of color TVs, Dad. You have the only TVs we can use to watch a movie on."

"Like what?"

"Like whatever we can find at Costco or Wal-Mart. Don't forget to get those combination VHS/DVD/Blu-ray players. We can go back later and shop for the titles we don't have. The Blu-ray Disc Association recommends that Blu-ray Disc drives should be capable of reading standard DVDs and CDs for backward compatibility. A few early Blu-ray Disc players released in 2006 could play DVDs but not CDs but all current Blu-ray Disc play-

ers are capable of both DVD and CD playback. Basically you need a backward compatible Blu-ray combined with a VHS player, or, one of each.”

“We also have to give some thought to getting another tanker. Gene is undecided if he wants to use your generator or hook up to the third one you brought back.”

“After what we picked up at Barstow, we can get him whatever he wants. If he wants a computer or something, just let us know.”

“Right now, he wants to move into his house and get the fuel stored behind a berm.”

“Tell him one day on moving in and maybe a week to ten days on the berm. Get him to help you with the chores to give us more free time.”

“Do you want us to find another tanker or will you do that?”

“Probably better if the two of you do that. It will allow us to focus on the tasks at hand.”

o

“Ron says one day on your mobile home and about two weeks on the berm. He suggested that you help with the chores and that you and I find the extra tanker for diesel fuel. I think we should try north on 99, up towards Chowchilla.”

“Sure, I can help with chores, what do you need me to do?”

“If you can feed them, I can muck the stalls and put down fresh bedding.”

“Lead on Sam.”

“Let me explain something Gene. You’re not only going to need furniture, you’re going to need a washer, dryer and a freezer for your home. Ron suggested we pick up some TVs and combo Blu-ray/VHS player and some additional movies. At the moment, all we have is the TV in the shelter and the one in my house.”

“What shelter?”

“Sort of my version of Cheyenne Mountain that I got it finished just a few days before the war. Come on and I’ll show you.”

I showed Gene the entrance to the shelter and my setup. While it wasn’t as fancy as NORAD, he was impressed and wanted to know how I’d managed to time it as close as I did. I explained that the shelter was finished in April, 2010. It wasn’t much after that when Iran launched missiles against Israel and they nuked Iran.

“There’s a fuel depot up at Friant, I think we’ll look there and look for a tanker. We might be able to load it there and bring it home. After that, we’ll go back to getting our fuel from Kettleman City.”

“How do you restore the fuel?”

“PRI-D. After the war, Ron and Bill made a trip up to Grants Pass, Oregon to a place called Batterystuff. Brought back a trailer load of PRI-G and PRI-D. On the way home, they stopped in Sunnyvale at an HRO store and loaded up on radios. Once we have your pickup and have the time, we’ll set it up with radios.”

“You should be able to get JP-5 at NAS Lemoore.”

“You might be able to, but if there are any remaining military there, we can’t. It would probably be easier to get Jet A from the Fresno Airport. Once we exhaust Kettleman, we might try the airport. Let’s face it, you said best estimates put it at 20 years before the cleanup is done and another 30 years or more after before the rebuilding is done.”

“Right and if you and I are still alive, we’ll probably be setting records for age.”

“I assume you have children?”

“We have a son who went to West Point and a daughter who went through the Coast Guard Academy. I know that my son and daughter are ok, as are their families. I’m not worried about them and I told them both that if I dropped off the radar to look in the Fresno area. It never hurts a military career to have a father who is a General officer; unless your name is McCain and you are a maverick.”

“Do you think he will try again in 2012?”

“I doubt it, he’s too old. Besides, holding elections is going to be a challenge.”

After we tended to the chores, we headed to Fresno to get Gene that new pickup. I took along 25 gallons of diesel to partially fill it. We got the pickup and returned to the acreage. Next, we took a semi and drove it up to Friant where we found a loaded Shell tanker. We unhooked that semi and replaced it with the one we drove up. I added 4 gallons of PRI-D to each tank so it would slosh around and partially mix with the fuel. We parked the tanker behind where the boys had a line strung for the new concrete wall. Next, we hooked onto the lowboy and headed for the furniture store, hoping no one would object to a daylight raid.

The boys came along to provide the lifting and Gene selected furniture for his home. Then we went to the Sears warehouse and picked up the washer, dryer and freezer. Finally, we went to Circuit City and picked up 3 TVs and 4 of those combined Blu-ray/VHS players. We could play anything, but there was no record function. When we got back,

the ladies had a list of things they needed to make the house a home. Gene and I drove them so they could shop without being worried about JBTs and MZBs.

Talking to Gene, I learned that Shirley had been a registered nurse and only gave it up when he made General. After, she kept herself up to date and still possessed her nursing license. While she hadn't practiced in around 9-10 years, he said she was still as sharp as ever. I suggested that he talk to her and make up a list of medical supplies she might need, just in case. I explained that when Sarah had her baby, Cindy and Ruth had to act as midwives. Now with Cindy due in a couple of weeks, the ladies could use all the help they could get. Sarah and Bill had two children, Cheryl and William and Sarah was early in her third pregnancy. It appeared that we'd be birthing babies for some time to come.

"If we get attacked again, we might need her services."

"How did that happen?"

"One day, three guys show up in a pickup looking for food. When I tried to stop them, the driver tried to take off and I blew out his left front tire. That's when it got messy. Bottom line is we killed all three, put their bodies in back of the pickup and dropped it off in or near Fresno. It seems that they must have been a scouting party for a larger group. About a month later, about 30 guys showed up, armed to the teeth with A3s. We got damned lucky and killed them all with no casualties. I had Sarah up in a second story window with the model 70 loaded with Black Hills."

"No trouble since then?"

"It hasn't been that long. However, thanks to you, we're better prepared than we ever were before. With that large bunch, I gave the order El Degüello."

"The bugle call that Santa Ana played at the Alamo?"

"Yes, it literally means slitting the throat, but is generally used to reflect no quarter. Anyone dumb enough to attack this little acreage won't be given quarter."

"Isn't that harsh?"

"Maybe, but it insures that they won't come back a second time."

"I can see when I'm going to need to adjust my attitude slightly."

"We have enough M1As to equip everyone in the family. If we have a pregnant one like Cindy is now and get attacked, we'll put her in that second story window with the sniper rifle. It's my rifle and I'm proficient with it, but both girls have spent a lot of time practicing and both are far better than me. At the ranges we'll be fighting at, they can put the bullets exactly where they want."

“We need to install those M203s on the A3s you have.”

“I’ll do that Gene, it shouldn’t take long. What did you get for 40mm grenades?”

“M433 for the 203 and M430 for the Mk19. They’re all HEDP rounds. On top of that, I ordered one other cartridge, the M576, you know it?”

“No, never fired a M203.”

“It’s the shotgun round and contains 20 00-pellets. Guess you could say that it’s a massive shotgun.”

“I’m glad we didn’t get any land mines. The M14 and the M16 are bad news and I don’t like playing around with those Claymores. We have two children here and before too long, that will be three. In a few months, Sarah will have her third baby and we’ll have a toddler in William. For a long time it seemed like Ruth and I weren’t going to have any grandchildren, but I guess the kids finally figured out the mechanics and we’d end up with a herd.”

“The thing that concerns me Sam is the jerk in the White House. They can pull my service record and determine that I’m originally from Fresno. He just might be mad enough, and I can assure you vindictive enough, to send someone looking for me.”

“They’d have to use something like FLIR to identify the people, wouldn’t they?”

“That’s not as difficult as you imagine. Their best bet would be to identify the people in outlying regions and check them first. If that didn’t turn me up, they could start going through the residents of Fresno. I’m glad now that I didn’t find my family, what they know can’t hurt me.”

“Yes, and we have a shelter that’s buried 10’ deep. No way FLIR can penetrate that far, is there?”

“Ground penetrating radar could, but it would have to be at ground level.”

“So, if we see someone coming that looks like military, we’ll put you in the shelter. If it’s ok for you to come out, we’ll give you a call on channel 9 of the CB. However, I guess we need some kind of code word so you’ll know we’re not under duress. Let me think on it.”

“Use that, *let me think on it.*”

“Right, I can easily put that in a sentence but what do we use for the opposite?”

“You mean if it’s not safe or you’re under duress?”

“Right.”

“How about, *haven't seen any strangers?*”

Bad Times – Chapter 11

“I could disguise that by calling the others on the radio and asking them what they knew and insert that I hadn’t seen any strangers.”

“Perfect, however, without one or the other, we’ll stay put.”

o

“Mr. President.”

“Yes Colonel, what is it?”

“I thought you should know that the Admiral received a message from MCLB, Barstow. The Colonel in charge of the base, Colonel Enzor, filled a requisition for General Brown. It is like you thought, he went to California.”

“That SOB wasn’t from Barstow, was he?”

“No sir, he was from Fresno. However, it’s only about 3 hours from Fresno to Barstow.”

“What did he requisition?”

“Mostly ammo. Plus he got 2 Mk46s, 2 Mk48s, 2 M240Bs, 2 M2HB and 1 Mk19.”

“What are they?”

“Machineguns, running from 5.56mm to 40mm. He also got an assortment of hand grenades, two trailer loads of ammo and LAW rockets.”

“What does that suggest to you Colonel?”

“He’s running some kind of paramilitary operation. He took enough matériel that they wouldn’t have to come back.”

“No individual weapons?”

“No sir, perhaps they already had them. One thing I find interesting is the quantity of 7.62x51mm ammo. That’s what they use in sniper rifles, mostly. The ammo he got was the M118LR, a specific sniper round. Since his request was for more than they had on hand, they filled the remainder of his order with M80 Ball ammo.”

“Will one kill you any quicker than the other?”

“No sir, the M118LR is just more accurate. Inside of combat ranges, say 400 meters, either one would be just fine.”

“We have to assume that he has rifles to use that ammo in. What kind of military rifle would be legal in California that shoots 7.62x51mm? I want you on a plane to California. Find that SOB and drag his sorry butt back here. I’ll draft a letter that you can take with you that will give you the full power of my office. If you need anything, just ask. When you bring him back, I’ll have a star waiting for your shoulder, maybe two.”

“Yes sir. The rifle in question is probably the M1A; it’s the civilian version of the M14. The General had 4 new-in-the-box M14s. Perhaps his forces are armed with the civilian version. The thing about those rifles is that a person can use a cutout and acquire the 20-round magazines and even the National Match Flashhider with the bayonet lug.”

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We had been busy unloading and sorting the ordnance. The heavy machine guns would be mounted in place near the homestead and would remain there. The medium machineguns would be about halfway between the homestead and the far corner of the property next to the road and the four lightweight machineguns would go in the trench. Maximum use of available personnel dictated that we have one sniper, 3 ladies on the heavy machineguns (Mk19 & M2HB) and 2 men on the M240Bs. The Mk46s and Mk48s would be weapons of opportunity. Individual weapons would only be brought into play if we couldn’t use the machineguns.

The grenades were in boxes ready to pass out and the LAW rockets had been removed from their cases and stacked. If for some reason Gene and Shirley couldn’t help, we’d give up one M2HB and one M240, only manning one of each. To get everyone in synch with the machineguns, we spent some time on the range after the wall was installed and the fuel tankers and propane tanks had been moved. On more than one occasion, we noticed contrails in the sky but didn’t put two and two together. Then one day a sole individual driving an old car pulled up to our driveway. I’d sent Gene and Shirley to the shelter, just in case.

“Help you?”

“Yes, I was hoping to buy some food.”

“Buy it with what?”

“I have some gold and silver coins.”

“You got a name?”

“David Allen.”

“I’m Sam George. Come in and we’ll discuss the food you want.”

“Thank you Mr. George.”

Shiny shoes and a GI haircut made me a bit nervous. I was trying to figure out how to send a radio message that said I hadn't seen any strangers.

“Ruth let everyone know that Mr. Allen is not a stranger.”

“You have radio communications?”

“We have a ham radio and CBs.”

“I see that you favor the M1A.”

“California doesn't qualify it as a banned weapon, it only has two points, semi-auto and detachable magazine.”

“But yours has a bayonet lug and a flashhider.”

“Aftermarket upgrades. Did you come to talk about my choice in weapons or did you want to talk about food?”

“Food. I'm heading back east and I'm looking for some travel food. I've been going from farm to farm making inquiries.”

“We don't have much spare food. I suppose we might be able to spare some pinto beans and rice and some of my homemade Colby cheese. Where back east are you going?”

“North of Albuquerque.”

Yeah, like maybe Colorado Springs? “That's a long trip, especially these days. Are you traveling alone or in a group?”

“Alone.”

“How about ten pounds each of beans and rice and three pounds of cheese? I can let you have that for two ounces of silver.”

“Do you take pre-65 coins?”

“Which denomination?”

“I have all three.”

“A half dollar has 0.3575 ounces, so it would take 5 half dollars and 3 dimes. Ruth, could you get Mr. Allen ten pounds of beans and ten pounds of rice? I'll go cut off a hunk of cheese.”

“There you go. When are you leaving?”

“I haven't decided. Say by any chance have you seen anyone around that you don't know?”

“No sir, I haven't seen any strangers, except you.”

If my first hint hadn't taken, flat out saying the catch phrase in front of Ruth would do the trick. She left the room immediately with a half-smile on her face. I knew that this guy was looking for Gene and he wasn't going to get him, not on my watch.

“Do you live here with your family?”

“I live with my wife, my son and his wife, my daughter and her husband and one child. We should have a second child in a couple of weeks and a third in a few months.”

“Well, I'd better be going, I appreciate the food.”

“You're welcome Mr. Allen.”

After Mr. Allen had pulled away and was well down the road, I got on the CB and said, “I'll have to think on it.” Gene and Shirley came out of the shelter about a minute later.

“Gene, that man had spit shined shoes and a military haircut. He said he was headed east and when I asked where, he said north of Albuquerque. Then, he asked a funny question about who lived here with me.”

“They're on to us. Those contrails were probably airplanes with FLIR taking a head count. They knew how many people were here and your count would have come up two short. Besides, you only told him three families and there are the house and three trailers.”

“Crap, me and my big mouth.”

“What did this guy say his name was?”

“David Allen.”

“About 6' tall, slim with jet black hair and a small scar on his left cheek?”

“That's the guy.”

“He’s a full Colonel on the staff at Cheyenne Mountain. He’d knife anyone in the back to get ahead. If that Colonel at MCLB, Barstow followed procedure, he’d have notified NORAD of the requisition, especially since it was for the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Allen is in charge of communications and even if the message was for the new Chairman, he’d keep a copy and try to make hay with it.”

“If he tries to eat the cheese I gave him, he may not come back.”

“Why do you say that?”

“One of my early batches of Jack cheese was so hot it would burn out the lining of your mouth. You’re not supposed to store Jack cheese, but I did. Not only is it hot, it’s probably inedible.”

“I’m sure he brought his own rations. Trying to buy food was just his excuse to pump you for information.”

“Cripes, I really screwed the pooch that time.”

“That depends. He is probably staying at NAS Lemoore and trying to get the commander to lend him some Marines to come up here. You said you have a sniper rifle, what is your maximum effective range?”

“I don’t know, maybe 600 or 700 yards. About the most I’ve shot at is 500 yards because that would allow me to cover this place.”

“If you had one of those FA762S Surefire suppressors on your M1A and a scope, what do you think you could do?”

“I heard the suppressor increases the bullet speed around 50fps and causes a slight increase in accuracy. Suppressors are illegal in California although they’re made here, down in Fountain Valley.”

“I have suppressors for all four of my M14s although I only have one adapter mounted. Do you want to try one?”

“I guess it couldn’t hurt. I have the alignment tool that I needed to put on the flashhider with the bayonet lug. Guess I’ll lose the bayonet lug, but it might be worth it.”

“Do you have an A.R.M.S. scope mount for your M1A?”

“Do I need one?”

“I have four of those, too plus the rings. You’ll have to use your scope, though.”

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When it was all said and done, I had an A.R.M.S. #18 M21/14 base and the throw lever rings plus the surefire adapter and a suppressor. I tried shooting and then had Sarah try. She was hands down better. We switched roles and she would do the sniping. I was concerned that killing the Colonel wouldn't make any difference, assuming he'd outline everything he knew about us to the Lemoore commander. Gene said that his read on the Colonel was that he was a borderline egomaniac and wouldn't tell anyone where they were going until they arrived.

The suppressor doesn't silence the rifle because the bullet is supersonic and the whole point is to reduce/change the sound, not eliminate it. The next morning we headed to Lemoore and set up just out of sight of the gate. From there, we hoofed it until Sarah said we could shoot from where we were.

"I'd expect Colonel Allen to be in the lead vehicle on the passenger side. NAS Lemoore doesn't have any up armored HMMWVs. Sarah if you can put one round through the passenger's windshield, I think you can take him out."

"But, you don't want me to stop shooting until we're sure, right?"

"Let answer this way, do whatever it takes. Is the sun going to be a problem?"

"It may prevent me from seeing inside the vehicle. I'd hate to shoot a Marine instead of the Colonel."

"Here they come, Sarah. Notice there's one M1025 HMMWV leading and another behind the deuce and a half. It's not armored so put one round into the center of the passenger side windshield, then wait and see."

The rifle gave off a loud pop as the bullet left the barrel. She was dead on and the bullet went through the center of the passenger windshield. The HMMWV stopped abruptly and the driver came around and opened the passenger door. He pulled out a flailing Colonel and laid him on the ground. A corpsman came running up from the rear HMMWV and began to check the Colonel over.

"Can you hit him one more time?"

"If that's what you want."

"We can't leave him alive. I seriously doubt that Colonel David Allen told anyone what his plans were."

"Whatever. He's still moving, is the order, no quarter?"

"Do it Sarah," I urged.

Her second shot hit the Colonel in the center of his head and he stopped moving. We began to withdraw back to our vehicle. We waited to see if anyone followed us and when we decided they hadn't, left by the route we'd come. Nobody talked much on the way back to the farm.

"Is that a wrap?"

"Gene, are we done?"

"Sarah, go ahead and clean your rifle. I get the other two suppressors and will give one to Ron and the other to Bill. Sorry, but I don't have any extra scopes. If you want the mounts, you can have them and we'll look around Fresno for more scopes."

"I think I'll put my Leopold back on my model 70, Gene. If we're looking for scopes, I recommend we go with a variable with a lower low power setting, maybe 1.5 to 2.5."

"Sam, you can take the suppressor off of Sarah's rifle and install it on yours. If she's going to be one of our machine gunners, she won't need the suppressor."

"I think I'd rather leave it on hers."

"Why?"

"Do you have any idea how hard it was to get the flashhider with bayonet lug and then adapt an M1942 to my rifle? My rifle worked just fine the way I had it set up. I don't need a scope at the ranges we'll likely be shooting. If it's all the same to you Gene, I keep my rifle just as it is. Anyway, I'm getting too old for this stuff. Let the younger people have all the fun and you and I can sit back and watch the grass grow."

"That will last all of ten minutes."

"Probably."

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The problem with Osama Obama was that he didn't know when to let go and let God. He was almightily po'd at General Eugene Brown USA (retired). NAS Lemoore notified him that Colonel Allen had been assassinated. All that accomplished was to make him angrier. He assumed, correctly, that Gene Brown was in the Fresno area. He didn't know that he was located a scant few miles from NAS Lemoore and was, in fact, closer to Lemoore than he was to Fresno. Allen didn't keep notes and whatever information he had ceased to exist when the second shot blew up his head.

Cindy had a very healthy 8 pound 3 ounce boy and they named him Samuel. By this time, Sarah was just beginning to show. I talked to Gene about the possibility of installing the suppressor from her rifle on the model 70. He replied I could do whatever

suited me but he didn't know anyone who could machine the threads on the barrel of my model 70. Once we started looking it took five weeks before we found someone with the skills to machine the threads on the barrel.

The guy was an ex-navy machinist's mate. I showed him the fast attach mount installed on a M1A and asked if he could put the threads on my model 70 so I could mount the FA adapter and the suppressor on that rifle. We dickered some and settled on a ¼ oz of gold. Gene gave me a fractional gold coin to pay him. He must have had one hell of a time taking off the barrel, or something, it took about three weeks before the rifle was ready.

The purpose of a suppressor isn't so much to hide the sound as it is to change it. The side benefit of having a suppressor is that it's the ultimate flashhider. When I got the rifle back, I sighted it in and noticed that it was much more accurate. I could shoot out to 600 yards (~550 meters) without any problem and further at silhouettes.

Let me tell more about me wanting that bayonet. The Japanese Arisaka Rifle at 1280 mm (4 feet, 2 inches) was the longest rifle of the Second World War, due to the emphasis on bayonet training for the Japanese soldier of the era who stood 160 cm (5 feet, 3 inches on average). The rifle was even longer when the 400 mm (15.75 inch) Type 30 bayonet was fixed. During WW II, when the military decided to reduce the length of the M1942 to 10", soldiers in the Pacific Theater wanted a bayonet as long as that of the enemy. Many of the M1942s were never shortened. Besides, the M14 looks better with the 16" bayonet. Check E-Bay and plan on \$250.

"So if they come back, what are you going to tell them?"

"I thought I'd add my brother and his wife to the family members here. I was an only child, brother."

"So now my name is Gene George?"

"Only when it needs to be but I don't know how we'll get you a driver's license or ID papers in your new name. Probably the best I could do would be to come up with a social security card and they're not considered identification. It's not like I created several spare identities, for use when I needed them."

"You didn't do a Henry Bowman?"

"Thought about it but I never did it."

"I not only thought about it, I did something about it. I have several identities for Shirley and me. I'll modify one set of papers to the name George."

"You can do that?"

“With a computer and samples of the original documents, a person can do just about anything except create a passport. You can do those too, but it won’t match any records in the computer system. As long as you only use it for ID, you’re ok. If you try to travel on it, you’re out of luck.”

“I wonder how close we were to needing travel papers.”

“A lot closer than you think Sam. He had all kinds of plans including the RFIDs.”

“Every time that came up, there was a hue and cry on my favorite websites. Most of the people considered an RFID as the Mark of the Beast.”

“They could be right. I’m not much into Revelations but I’ve read it. It was easier to listen to the on air ministries than figure it out. John Hagee had a very large following, close to 20,000, before the war. What’s your position on the RFID?”

“Not while I have a breath left in me Gene.”

“A bit of a rebel are we?”

“I obey the laws that make sense and ignore the others, as much as possible. I’d have a Barrett rifle had I been able to come up with the money.”

“That’s why you asked me to requisition the M107?”

“Yes.”

“It so happened that they didn’t have one or any of the Mk 211 MP. The Colonel said that they couldn’t keep them in stock.”

“I wouldn’t wonder. The rifle is around eight grand, the scope another couple of grand and I read that the ammo goes for seven-fifty a round.”

“I wouldn’t know, all I saw was the budget requests and they lump everything by category, like x number of rounds of Mk 211 MP.”

“If I had the money and knew where I could get one, I might be tempted.”

“Think you could find one in Reno?”

“Even if we could, I don’t have the money.”

“Maybe not, but I do. Wouldn’t it be risky driving up to Reno?”

“Ron and Cindy did it so they could get properly married. They didn’t have any trouble and he bought her an M1A for a wedding present.”

“The next question has to be, do we need one?”

“Probably not; the whole idea was to hunker down here and keep the acreage secure. As it is, we have a rifle and pistol for everyone and nearly a shotgun for everyone. On top of that, we have seven machineguns, the A3s, LAWs and grenades. I’d put our odds of winning at ten to one, if we were attacked again.”

“But wouldn’t it be fun shooting a big gun like that?”

“I’m sure it would. If you’re looking for an excuse, don’t let me stand in your way. Problem would be getting the Raufoss, that Mk 211 MP.”

“Not as hard as you think. You know, I also looked at the McMillan TAC-50 aka Mk 15. A complete package with 2 magazines is about the price of the M107 and it much more accurate. Since it’s a bolt action McMillan markets the Elite Iron suppressor for it. Extra magazines are pricey but you can add a night vision rail and an AN/PVS-27 if you can find one. I know this retired Command Sergeant Major who was a sniper. He had the worst kill ratio of anyone I knew, something like 2.6 shots per kill. I found out that for every round he shot, he put one back so his actual kill ratio was around 1.3 shots per kill. I did some mental arithmetic and figured he must have put back around 20 cases of Mk211MP. I never figured out how he got it off post and tucked away, but he must have found a way. We might be able to get him to part with some of his ammo if the price was right.”

“And fill up the rest with M33 ball?”

“Nope, Hornady 750gr A-MAX Match. Do you feel like giving it a try?”

“0530 tomorrow morning too early?”

“I’ll be ready.”

We drove up using the Sacramento route and when we got to Reno had a dickens of a time finding a gun shop that was open. When we did, he didn’t sell .50 caliber rifles. He said he knew someone who did and if we’d tell him what we wanted, he could try and have it by 2pm. We told him a McMillan TAC-50 with the Nightforce NXS 12-42x56mm scope, 10 magazines total and the night vision rail. If he could get the AN/PVS-27, so much the better. Next we got a city map and Gene looked up the Sergeant.

“What the hell are you doing here General?”

“Looking for some of that ammo you didn’t shoot up Sergeant.”

“What ammo was that?”

“The Raufoss. I figured you got away with maybe 20 cans. I’d like half of it and I’ll pay.”

“How much?”

“I’ll give you \$5 a round.”

Bad Times – Chapter 12

“Ten.”

“Five and I’ll only take 1,200 rounds.”

“Seventy-five hundred, my last offer.”

“Done.”

“You have a rifle?”

“Should have TAC-50 later this afternoon.”

“Heard you got made the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.”

“I resigned. That jerk is absolutely crazy.”

“Where are you living now?”

“Down around Fresno.”

“Had any trouble over resigning?”

“Nothing we didn’t handle. Remember a bird Colonel named David Allen?”

“Real peckerwood, that one. That’s who they sent?”

“Yes, Sergeant and we gave him one hell of a head ache. Sam’s daughter was behind the rifle and she put him out of his misery.”

“What range?”

“Around 500 meters with an M1A, Loaded model.”

“Fair shooting, one shot kill?”

“No, he was in a HMMWV and the sun was on the windshield. She wounded him and when they pulled him out, she put one right dead center in his head.”

“Tricky shot when you can’t see. All that counts is that she took out the target. What do you need a .50 cal for?”

“Fun, mostly; plus thumbing our nose at the government of the state of California.”

“I heard San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco got hit.”

“Right on, except they dropped three on LA.”

“Damned shame they didn’t nuke Sacramento.”

“That why you moved to Nevada?”

“Yep. How long is it going to take the country to recover?”

“My guess is the better part of 50 years. Neither of us will be around to see it happen.”

“Damned shame, but it was never a question of if, not after five countries had nukes. But, you never know about things. Three-four years back we got hit by a swarm of earthquakes right here in Reno.”

“The dealer said he’d have our rifle after 2pm. Will you take gold at \$1,500 an ounce?”

“Sounds right, five ounces.”

On the way back to the gun store, Gene mention he’d paid around \$300 an ounce for the gold he’d just spent. The ammo only cost him \$1,500 in old money. That was a good price, \$1.25 a round. And then he went on to say that the Sergeant Major must have taken more than he knew about because he parted with 1,200 rounds too easily.

“Get the rifle?”

“Yes, and it has the scope you wanted installed including the night vision rail and 10 magazines total. You need ammo?”

“How much do you have?”

“Twenty cases of 200-rounds. It’s not Barrett; it’s Hornady A-MAX 750gr match. I can get you some military surplus, if you want.”

“No, that will be fine, we’ll take it.”

“All twenty cases? Are you expecting some kind of war?”

“All twenty cases and this will be our practice ammo.”

“The rifle is \$10,000, the scope \$50, the night vision rail \$300, 8 magazines \$390 each, suppressor \$1,500 and set of parts kits \$175. The total is \$15,145 plus ammo. The A-Max is expensive and I can let it go for \$850 a case. Grand total is \$32,145 call it 21.4 ounces of gold.”

“Deal.”

“Where are you headed, California?”

“Couldn’t do that, it would be illegal.”

“Hell this whole transaction is illegal, there’s no way to run a national instant criminal background check. Stupid damned law anyway.”

Gene chuckled. “Did I say something funny?”

“No, you reminded me of Henry Bowman.”

“That guy in that book? He had the right idea, but it’s too late now, what with the war.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure if I were you. I heard round about that Obama wants to grab the guns.”

“He can have mine, one bullet at a time.”

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“It’s your rifle Gene, you sight it in and then I’ll try it at various ranges.”

“Do you have a notebook so we can write down the different settings for the Hornady and Raufoss?”

“I brought a small one; that should be enough, don’t you think?”

“Yes. Ok, 100 yards with Hornady.”

Gene fired 3 rounds and we checked them in the spotting scope he had. He was one inch high and two inches left. The air was still and none of the grass or weeds was moving. He adjusted the scope, changed magazines and fired three more rounds. They were dead center and overlapping. He changed magazines fired 3 more rounds and the hole simply expanded.

“Do you still have one round in the rifle?”

“Most shooters prefer to only load 5 rounds. I loaded 3 per magazine.”

“Why’s that, magazine spring?”

“I don’t know, probably.”

“Let me go replace the target and we’ll shoot some more.”

“I’ll load a magazine for you, Sam. I’ll going to go with five rounds this time.”

After I replaced the target, I took my turn. Since our acreage was basically square, the diagonal distance for one corner to the diagonal corner was right around 659 yards or about 602 meters. We discussed the possibility of trying a diagonal shot to confirm the sighting. We ended up setting up a 600-yard temporary range and got ready to shoot.

“The wind’s up. I make it about 5mph.”

“Closer to 10, but not quite up to 10.”

“Quartering, though. I think that I’ll just shoot three rounds at point of aim and adjust. I have a book I got from a website called Exterior Ballistics, but it’s not handy.”

“I can’t believe the wind could have much effect on a 750gr bullet at 600 yards. A .50 BMG round can produce between 10,000 and 15,000 foot pounds or more energy, depending on its powder and bullet type, as well as the rifle it was fired from. Due to the high ballistic coefficient of the bullet, the .50 BMG’s trajectory also suffers less drift from cross-winds than smaller and lighter calibers, making the .50 BMG a good choice for high powered sniper rifles.”

“A thought just occurred to me Sam. The correct designation for the Raufoss is HEIAP.”

“Are we going to shoot some?”

“I brought 10-rounds and after we check our aim at 600-yards, we might just do that.”

The round struck 1” left of center and Gene adjusted the scope and fired 1 more round to confirm. When we saw they were on the mark, he fired the last three rounds and went to change the target. I reloaded the magazine with 5-rounds and waited for him to return. The groups were larger, but you wouldn’t want to be the guy on the other end of that gun. I checked the wind and fired all 5-rounds.

“Do you think we should belt some of the Raufoss?”

“We haven’t used up a full belt of the 4 and 1 yet, so we’d be short on links. I noticed that they gave us two kinds: ball and tracer; and, armor piercing and armor piercing incendiary tracer. The first mix is for practice and the second is what they generally use in combat.”

“With what we had to begin with and what we have now, I seriously doubt we need more guns or ammo Gene.”

“Probably not Sam, but we could use some work on our communications. We need a code word and an authentication word. Something easier than we used last time; and, something shorter, maybe a single word or maybe two.”

“Use the phonetic code perhaps?”

“NATO version?”

“I think that would work. We could use two letters and change the code and authentication every four hours. Maybe I could work up something on my computer.”

“How?”

“I’ll use the text function and the concatenate function and create a series of columns with value from 1 to 26. Then the text function will refer to a column and add 64 to that value. Once I have two columns of letters, I can use the concatenate function to combine them.”

“Will it work?”

“Won’t know until I try, but I think so. Then we can use the sort function or something to work out unrelated columns of numbers.”

“This I gotta see.”

Actually I was talking out of the side of my mouth, I hadn’t tried this before. I was surprised when it worked just as advertised. A column of AA through ZZ was easy. The difficulty arose when I had to create Multiple columns for multiple combinations. I settled on 31 columns of the paired letters, one for each numbered day. Then to make it a bit more complicated, we would randomly assign column numbers representing that day number at the beginning of every month and I’d print out a new list.

“Did you ever think of trying to make a living programming spreadsheets?”

“Nope, I like shooting and gardening in that order. The problem with shooting sports is if you let yourself get out of practice, you’re inviting disaster. We might be able to handle 10 to 1, hell maybe 20 to 1, with the equipment we have now, thanks to you. If we allowed ourselves to get out of practice it could and would probably drop the odds.”

“I loaded the Raufoss data, want to go shoot later?”

“Six hundred yards?”

“I think that would be as good of a test as we could manage under the circumstances.”

After lunch, we set up 2 targets at the 600-yard range and drove to the other corner of the acreage. Gene had loaded two magazines with 5-rounds of Raufoss each and he shot first. The groups were about 5” at 600 yards, with no wind blowing.

“I would have thought that my kids would have shown up by now. Maybe the military won’t let them leave and they’re tied up somewhere doing clean up.”

“Where would they go, if they did come?”

“Probably my parents’ place, I held title and rented it out after they died. I had a rent management firm handle the place. I didn’t think to check there from time to time.”

“Let’s go do it.”

“Right now?”

“It’s at least three hours to supper, we have plenty of time.”

Gene directed me to the address and when we got there we stopped and got out. About halfway to the door, an attractive young woman came running, yelling “Daddy.”

“You brother show up yet?”

“No, he was in Florida, working on the Miami cleanup. I got leave because I had reached the limit and my CO didn’t want me to lose it.”

“How long have you been here?”

“About a week.”

Gene motioned for me to get out of the truck so I went to meet his daughter Debbie. She was soon joined by her husband Sean (Shawn). She had her service pistol and he had an M1911. We visited a while and then Gene suggested they come to the acreage and stay with them. I half expected children, but Sean and Debbie didn’t have any, yet.

They followed us in their car, and before they left ask if it was far, they were low on gas. I gave them two Blitz cans to fuel up part way and they could top off when they got home. One thing we had no shortage of was gasoline. They had the back seat of the SUV folded down and it was full of empty gas cans. At least, I assumed they were empty.

A person couldn’t see the tankers after the boys put up the wall; but, that was the purpose in the first place, hide them and protect them. I noticed Sean and Debbie only had a single suitcase, one of those fold-over jobs that officers frequently use. After they settled in, Sean began unloading the 5-gallon gas cans and by my count they had 40. Well, I guess those SUVs were never noted for getting good mileage.

Ruth went over to Gene and Shirley’s and invited everyone over to supper. She’d opened two canned hams and had mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes and canned corn planned for supper. I dug around and found a second bottle of bourbon and we had

drinks before supper. During the conversation that ensued, I asked Sean about hunting, their state of preparations and numerous things so I could get an idea how well they would fit in here.

“Sam, I have a Remington model 770 in .308 Winchester and an 870 Express combo with rifle sights on the short, smooth bore. I got the three shot magazine extension for it when I wanted to have it set up as a tactical shotgun. The only other firearm I have is the .45 you saw me wearing. Debbie has the Mossberg 590A1, a Springfield Armory M1A Super Match plus her service pistol. For backup, she has a Walther PPK in .380.”

“How are you fixed on ammo?”

“We have one case of South African surplus and a dozen or so rounds of hunting ammo. I bought a case Brenneke slugs and a case of Federal High Power, low recoil 9-pellet 00 buck. We probably have 500 rounds of Speer Gold Dot in each of our pistol calibers.”

“Does she have a scope on that Super Match?”

“She has a Leopold Mk 4, variable power. I think it is a 4.5-14x50mm LR/T M1.”

“Magazines?”

“Twenty-five of those T-57s. Gene taught her and she’s a fabulous shot.”

“So, all she really needs is some good ammo for her rifle? We acquired a sizeable quantity of M118LR, 175gr. That ought to be perfect for her rifle.”

“Dinner’s ready.”

“Thanks Ruth. Well, look at me, I was so busy discussing firearms, my glass is still full. I’ll put it in the refrigerator; I don’t usually drink after I eat.”

“Debbie, Sean said you were an excellent shot. Have you ever tried the military M118LR?”

“I only used it when I could get it, which wasn’t often. The fast twist in my Super Match stabilizes the 175gr bullet well.”

“We have a large quantity so you should take a couple of cases.”

After dinner, Ruth, Shirley and the girls shooed Debbie out of the kitchen and we talked a bit more about her rifle. She said she had the Mossy Oak McMillan stock and had added a leather cheek piece. She didn’t care for the adjustable stock found on the National Match and the M21. Her rifle was easily capable of ¼ - ½ MOA shots and she was too, with enough practice.

I listened and told myself, "Now, we have a real sniper."

The next day after breakfast Gene came by. He said that he'd talked to Debbie last night after they'd gone home and she informed him that she left a letter with her CO that said if she wasn't back by the end of her leave period, the letter should be construed as her Letter of Resignation. He went on to say that after they had discussed his resignation, both Sean and she had decided to stay in Fresno. For now, they'd live with Gene and Shirley and when we could find time, we could look for another singlewide and share their generator with his kids. He also said that he sure wished he had the means to get in contract with his son, Tom.

"Does he have a ham radio?"

"He has one, but only for emergencies, Sam."

"We could try to contact someone in the area where he is working and ask them to pass a message that would include a frequency we'd monitor."

"I'll write down the particulars like his unit, his full name, rank and so forth. If you can get a message to him, I'd be grateful."

"Does he have a few good guns like your daughter?"

"He makes her look like an amateur. He bought into that survivalist mentality even more than I did and armed them accordingly. They have a motorhome much better than the one Shirley and I have and he added really long range fuel tanks. Even at 6mpg, he says he could make a 3,000 mile journey and never once slow down. His wife Carol and he would switch off driving while the other rested. It might take them several days to get here, but if he made his mind up to do it, all we'd have to do is keep an eye on the house in town."

"What's he have?"

"A Winnebago 2009 Vectra 40TD. They wouldn't even need a singlewide until they have kids. It has an 8.9L Cummins turbo diesel, Allison 6-speed electronic transmission and uses propane. I'm pretty sure he has a generator."

I went out on the ham net for several nights before I hooked up with a ham west of Miami. I explained who I was, where I was and what we wanted. He said he couldn't promise to find Thomas Brown, a Captain, but he'd do his level best and pass along the frequency if he found him. I had selected a frequency in the 20-meter band, not certain what Tom had for ham equipment. A week later, I was sitting at the radio half bored out of my mind when I heard my call sign.

"Is this Thomas Brown and is your father Eugene Brown, a General?"

“Last I knew he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs.”

“He resigned and is living near his home town. He would like you to join him there and meet with him at your grandparents’ home. Debbie and Sean are already here and she has resigned her commission.”

“Acknowledged. Give me four days tops and we’ll be there. Tell Dad that he’s a grandfather, Carol had the baby, a boy who we named Eugene.”

“Will you require housing?”

“Negative, plenty of room for a baby crib.”

“Lock and load before you leave, that’s long way and you never know who you will run into.”

“Acknowledged. I’m sorry; I have to go, what’s your name?”

“Sam George and we’ll monitor this frequency constantly until you get here Tom.”

We had a total of four of the Kohler 50REOZJB generators and each could power two homes with 100 amps of prime power. We had the house and three singlewides and would probably end up with more. We were only using half of our generating capacity.

*What though the radiance
which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass,
of glory in the flower,
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.*

-

William Wordsworth

The movie starred Natalie Wood, Warren Beatty, Pat Hingle, Audrey Christe, Barbara Loden and Zohra Lampert. Zohra was the gal who ended up married to Beatty. He was

lucky, now he has Annette Bening who keeps getting lost in Dupont Circle and is in love with a guy who says he's *going to get the guns*.

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It was around noon on the fourth day that Tom and Carol arrived. I realized that the 40TD designation referred to the length of the motorhome. We led them back to the acreage. Ron and Bill had gotten another singlewide and hooked it up to the utilities and even had it wired to one of the generators. Just after Tom and Carol arrived, they pulled in with another 1,100-gallon propane tank. They introduced themselves and went back to installing the propane tank. They didn't have quite enough propane to completely fill the tank (full was 1,000-gallons) and headed out to refill the propane delivery truck.

As was becoming the case when someone new showed up, Ruth prepared a big meal so we could all get acquainted. I took my unfinished drink from when Debbie and Sean arrived and added ice. Instead of hogging the conversation, I kept quiet and let Tom and his Dad get caught up. I wanted to know what things were like around the country and this was my best shot.

Bad Times – Chapter 13

However, Tom wanted to talk guns with his Dad and I learned all I wanted to know about his firearm skills. I finished up my watered down drink and went to add a splash to my glass. Carol was in the kitchen with the wives and daughters nursing baby Gene. Basically, I couldn't get a word in edgewise until Ruth called us for dinner. She had a large plate of fried chicken, smashed potatoes, lima beans and chicken gravy. I was going to have to go back on a diet if any more people showed up.

"You want to try your hand at some shooting Tom? We only have a 600-yard range, but we've even used it for your Dad's Tac-50."

"That's strange, Sam; last night he told me the rifle was yours and he just financed it for you. He also said you picked up some Mk 211 MP."

"Ten cases. I sure wish we had more."

"I'd be willing to make a trip to Barstow to see if they got some in. Anything else you overlooked?"

"You know about toilet paper?"

"What do you mean?"

"There are some things you can never have too much of. Things like toilet paper, beans, rice and M14 rifles."

"I'd say I could get you three dozen M14s, you'd need magazines, right?"

"Right, like 900; and, the ammo could be M80 ball as long as we had 5,000-rounds per rifle. We don't have that many people yet, but this place is growing faster than a housing development."

"It would be easier to get M16s."

"We have 30 M16A3s, but we could use more magazines and ammo."

"Where did you get the M16s?"

"We were attacked a while back and Sarah was in the bedroom window being our sniper. She was about 8½ months pregnant and I put her there to keep her safe. She was using my Winchester model 70 shooting Black Hills 175gr BTHP. She accounted for about ⅓ of the casualties."

"Casualties or fatalities?"

“Same difference Tom, no quarter given.”

“Is that your SOP?”

“I hate to have to fight the same guy twice, so I guess so. Your Dad helped us out with that trip to Barstow, but if you want to try and get more, you’re free to try. Have Gene explain the ruse we used so you don’t repeat it, might be a dead giveaway.”

“I see what I can do Sam. One hundred eight cases of ammo must weigh about 5 tons. I’ll have to find a ten ton truck and add a trailer.”

“You asked, but if you can’t make it work, get what you can. I wouldn’t mind have some 30-round M16 magazines, maybe around 650 and more ammo too, M855.”

“I’ll run it by Dad, he may have suggestions.”

Gene’s first suggestion was don’t try it. When he reconciled himself to the idea, he suggested that both Tom and Debbie go, he was Army and she was Coast Guard. They began to develop a plan revolving around the Port of Los Angeles/Long Beach. While they’d try and get weapons and ammo, they also request matériel to be transported to the harbor by train. They spent hours trying to decide what they’d need to reopen the ports. The real Godsend was the absence of telephone and telegraph. Requisitions had returned to being typewritten or verbal as in the case of something destined for NORAD or one of the other shelter locations.

By requesting M855 and magazines, they’d confirm they were supplying military units and the M14s were on every Coast Guard vessel in service. They used them for, among other things, detonating mines. Considering the number of Coast Guard vessels in and around Los Angeles, 36 rifles weren’t all that many.

On another subject, electricity, I really hadn’t expected it to remain down forever. I assumed that when the Air Defense Emergency was declared, San Onofre and Diablo Canyon had been scrambled. What I couldn’t understand was why they hadn’t been brought back online after the emergency passed; unless some major power lines were down. I asked Tom to see what, if anything, the Marines in Barstow knew about it.

In order to haul the weapons and ammo, we searched Fresno and found a box trailer to pull with one of our semi tractors. I got demoted to E5 and would be the driver again. Before they finalized the requisition, we made one final pass and added a few optional items, like Stingers, M136AT4s and like weapons. The Corps prefers the M72 to the M136, but it couldn’t hurt to ask and if they couldn’t fill the order, we might get more LAWs. The Mk 211 was at the top of the list, to allow the port to deal with an ever increasing amount of violence from the LA gangs, who miraculously survived three nukes.

Better body armor than the cops had? Don’t laugh, I’ve heard stranger things; or, doesn’t the North Hollywood shootout ring your chime? Two guys, wearing homemade

body armor and carrying AKs with drum magazines managed to keep a hundred or so cops at bay for 45 minutes and in so doing, more cops got hurt than bad guys. Of course, the LAPD got even; they let the second suspect bleed to death before they allowed the Paramedics in and then claimed the paramedics couldn't enter a danger zone.

"If he gets the supplies you want, where are we going to put them?"

"Any ideas?"

"How about a prefabricated building? Something we could pick up at a lumberyard and simply move here."

"If you can find one, you can find two. I don't like storing food in the barn with the livestock."

"In other words, the more the merrier?"

"Works for me."

I had started a moustache in hopes of changing my appearance enough that even if the same guard was on the gate I wouldn't be recognized. I have a heavy beard and my five o'clock shadow is very pronounced. Tom said we'd give it ten days before we went back to Barstow and that would give me time to change the stripes on my uniform plus grow the moustache. Meanwhile, the boys returned from town without the shed, but had a load of building materials.

"Couldn't find one large enough Sam so we decided to build one and use that treated plywood for the floor. We picked up everything we need, 2x4s, 2x6s, nails, plywood, a pre-hung door and even two windows. We got eight 4-bulb fluorescent fixtures for light. I figure we can build a 20x40 building with the materials we have."

"It would have been nice to have a concrete floor, Bill."

"That's what Ron said and we found a Ready Mix truck loaded up and just shy the water to make concrete. The floor would be 800ft² and if we made it 4" thick we'd need 267 cubic feet or around 10 yards. Want us to go back and get the truck?"

"How big was the truck?"

"Twelve yards, why?"

"It would give us enough for a small foundation if we make the floor 3½" thick. Not much of one, but it would keep the slab from floating. The 2x4s you will use for forms have a dimension 3½" anyway. We'll settle for a screed finish."

“When are you going back to Barstow Dad?”

“Just as soon as my moustache fills in and changes my appearance. That’s just in case we have the same guard on the gate.”

“You think you can run the same scam twice and not get caught?”

“I would say that if we were going to haul everything away in the truck, probably not. However, the requisition is going to include a trainload of goods to be delivered to Los Angeles Harbor. Won’t be able to pull it off a third time regardless, so this is a do or die trip. We found a 10-ton truck and that should cover all the ammo we want, but I haven’t seen Tom’s final list.”

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“Don’t tell me, you’re here with a requisition and plan to haul it all off in that truck and trailer.”

“No Corporal, we will haul a small amount off in the truck and trailer, but the requisition requests that the majority of it be moved by rail to the Port of Los Angeles/Long Beach. As you can clearly see, both the Lieutenant and I have the proper ID and the requisition is typed up on the correct form.”

“Some four star was here a while back and he wasn’t even military according to Cheyenne Mountain.”

“You don’t say. What was his name?”

“General Eugene Brown. Is it coincidence that both you and the Lieutenant have the same last name as his?”

“Must be, the Lieutenant and I have the same last name and aren’t even distantly related.”

“I’ll call in and see if they want to let you in.”

“If they don’t, let me know and I’ll contact Cheyenne Mountain myself.”

The absurdity of what Tom said went right over the Lance Corporal’s head; a Captain calling Cheyenne Mountain? Right, maybe as a high ranking officer’s aide, but not otherwise. With the destruction of Washington DC, Cheyenne Mountain had become the de facto White House and the Greenbrier had become the de facto Capitol building. We still had a government, of sorts. It had no money to spend because the IRS was temporarily out of business and the mints didn’t print gold and silver, our old/new de facto standard currency. The more things changed, the more they stayed the same. FDR took

us off the gold standard and the Chinese had put us back on it. In his first inaugural address FDR claimed, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

"Never say never?" Bob Seger and Lindsay Lohan, to name two, but the original source remains somewhat of a mystery. I think maybe it was Gloria Swanson who said, "Never say never, for if you live long enough, chances are you will not be able to abide by its restrictions. Never is a long, undependable time, and life is too full of rich possibilities to have restrictions placed upon it." Her main claim to fame that most of us remember was *Sunset Boulevard*, opposite a much younger William Holden.

"Pull up to the second building on your left."

"Thank you Corporal."

"Different guy or he didn't recognize you?"

"Different guy, Tom. Now for the hard part."

"I set for around 20 minutes before a Gunnery Sergeant came to the truck and directed me to a loading dock. They disconnected the trailer and loaded the truck, first. Ammo is very heavy and when they had loaded 10-tons, they reconnected the trailer and loaded the remainder in it."

"Say, don't I know you?" the Gunny asked.

"You might be mistaking me for my brother, he's a Master Sergeant."

"That must be it, what does he do, anyway?"

"He was a gopher for some 4 star. Have you met him?"

"I met him and his four star. They showed up out of the blue with a requisition that was as phony as a three dollar bill. Hauled off 3 pickup and 3 trailer loads of matériel. We've been leery since, but since you're having most of the stuff you want shipped by rail, you must be on the up and up."

"Here comes my Captain and that Coasty. Sorry Gunny, I have to go."

"She's not half bad looking for an officer."

"With the non-fraternization guidelines, I didn't pay much attention, so if you say so..."

"How did it go?"

“At first that commanding officer gave us a ration of crap. Then when he saw that most of the matériel was going by rail, he backed off. He even asked if there was anything we’d overlooked on our list.”

“And you said?”

“I said that couple of M40s would be nice in addition to the M14s, but we doubted he had them.”

“He said the Marines used the M40A1 and he had two plus a new shipment of M118LR. Fixed us right up, if you can believe that.”

“What about the M14s?”

“We got 36 of those and two of the M21s with a load of magazines for the M16s and M14s. If you turned your acreage into a housing tract, we could supply most of the people with ammo and possibly firearms.”

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When we returned, they had finished putting the tarpaper and shingles on the roof of the storage building. It was sided with that treated plywood and the women were in the process of moving the food from the pole barn to the new storage building. At the moment, it was stacked because until the building was completed, Ron and Bill hadn’t had time to build shelving. They were working on that now using 2x4s and $\frac{3}{4}$ ” plywood.

If the government got its act together and came here, we couldn’t stop them. The M-72 could penetrate 300mm of rolled homogeneous steel armor. The M136 AT4 could penetrate 400mm of rolled homogeneous steel armor. We could probably handle a M113, but a Bradley or an Abrams would be out of our reach. Conversely, we could shoot down any aircraft within the range of the Stinger missiles. Could you take out a Bradley with a Stinger? We should have gotten TOW missiles.

What we did was to load the bottom shelves with ammo and the upper shelves with food. If, heaven forbid, we had another earthquake, the weight of the ammo should help anchor the shelving. The boys also added lips to the shelves to keep jars from falling off. I guess it took the better part of a week to move everything and unload the truck and trailer. We didn’t need the truck for anything I could think of so Tom returned it to where they’d found it.

The shelving couldn’t tip over very far; in the 20’ width of the shed were five columns of 18” wide shelving separated aisles a little over 26” wide. We left out the shelves in the columns opposite the door so we could access each row of shelving. We had 200’ of shelving minus 20’ or 180’ of 72” high shelving. If you counted the actual shelves, we had 900’ of 18” deep shelving.

We emptied much of our basement into the storage building and began to use it for the armory. A portion of the matériel was kept ready to go for the next attack, assuming we were attacked again. Exceptions were made for things that would go boom in the night, like the rockets and the C-4 that Tom picked up at Barstow. I hadn't seen the requisition and between Gene and Tom, they added several things we didn't have. I wondered about the explosives, were they planning on something and leaving me out of the loop?

"Gene, I got to looking at what Tom brought back from Barstow. I have to ask, are you and he planning further actions or do we really need all of that stuff?"

"I'd rather have it and not need it. He didn't get that much explosives, but we could use what he got as improvised mines in the road, for example."

"I've thought about the weaponry we have. We have nine machineguns, two kinds of rockets, 6-7 kinds of grenades, and enough ammo we couldn't shoot it up in our lifetimes."

"That's the point Sam; the commander at Barstow told Tom he wouldn't be getting any more supplies. Once what they have is gone, they may close up shop. With luck, we older people will be good for another 25 years, maybe more. Sure we can grow food, but manufactured items like the matériel won't come back until the rebuild is completed."

"What's that saying, *fool me once, shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me?*"

"So?"

"That commander down at Barstow probably has his teat in a wringer."

"He may not have reported the shipment. That's why Tom and Debbie both went, it lent a degree of authenticity to the requisition and having most of the goods shipped to the harbor was sheer genius. When the goods arrive, they spend some time trying to figure out who the goods are for. By the time they realize that there is no such unit at the harbor and send the train back to Barstow, the waters should be muddy. However if they've run out of supplies, they may be shut down already."

"Is there anything that you had shipped by rail that we could use?"

"Not really, no."

"The guard on the gate was a different Marine, but the Gunny they assigned to help me get loaded seemed to remember me. I suggested maybe he was thinking of my brother, a Master Sergeant. I told him my brother was a gopher for some 4 star."

"And, he bought that?"

“It was probably the moustache. I got to get it cut off, it’s driving me crazy. As we sorted and packed the food and munitions, I did an inventory. I figure Einstein was wrong, we’ll have rifles and ammo for WW IV and possibly WW V.”

“I put 35 years in the Army counting West Point. I seriously doubt there will be a WW IV. However, I never thought we’d actually have WW III. I would think it more likely that some natural disaster would happen than more missiles flying.”

“I agree that it would be nice if no more missiles flew, but I’m not so certain about the natural disasters. A few years back, the USGS gave us a 30-year timeframe on the *Big One*, and that’s not the worst of it, remember that BBC production, *Supervolcano?*”

“What about it?”

“They said the odds were 1 chance in 20,000 on any given day. I’d hate to think what it would be like here if it did erupt.”

“Shouldn’t be a big deal, you have the shelter.”

“Which, I might point out was never designed to hold as many people as we have here now. It’s doable, but we have to sleep in shifts. My air filtration system is homemade and consists of HEPA filters and furnace filters. Unfortunately I was taking a chance that we wouldn’t be dealing with chemical weapons. Worked out ok, but that’s beside the point.”

◦

Of greater importance was the garden, now up to around 100,000ft². The additional space in the pole barn gave us room to begin expanding the herds and we had hens brooding to produce our own chicks. Some folks like to grow rabbits, but I’m not one of them. By head count, our largest meat crops were chicken, followed by pork and finally beef. It makes sense if you think about it; the average fryer goes maybe 3½ pounds, a baking hen 6-8 pounds, a turkey from 12-24 pounds while we could get 715-pounds of edible meat from one steer and maybe 145 pounds of edible from a hog.

With the garden taking up almost half of the place and the continuously increasing size of the homestead, the livestock had very little pasture to graze. Not that it mattered, we fed them hay and grain. From where, you might ask and I’d have to admit to more looting/salvage, call it what you will. It mostly came from abandoned farms and from a grain elevator. There was enough grain in the elevator to last 50 years and dry grains don’t usually spoil. Nonetheless, the cattle need hay because it makes up much of their diet. We fed a lot of corn and generally got fast growing prime beef.

Look at this way; did we have everything we needed? No. Were we able to get the things we were missing? Mostly. Would things ever go back to the way they were before

WW III? Not in our lifetimes. What was the rest of the country doing while we were busy surviving in Fresno? That's more complicated.

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"What do you mean they did it again?"

"Mr. President, an Army Captain and a Coast Guard Lieutenant presented themselves at Barstow with a properly filled out requisition. The commanding officer was leery, having been burnt before. They wanted the majority of the items on the requisition to be shipped to Los Angeles Harbor by rail and only took a small portion in their vehicle and trailer. It was only discovered when the train was returned to Barstow, and then by a civilian contractor."

"Weren't General Brown's children in the military?"

"Yes. His son was in the Army and his daughter was in the Coast Guard. Wait, do you mean to tell me you think those two were his children?"

"If I can figure it out, anyone can figure it out. What are they going after next, Abrams tanks?"

"They might be able to get an older model from Ft. Irwin."

"Let's hope they don't think of that. Now, tell me how you're doing on picking up the guns."

"We haven't tried. You have to understand that there are over 200 million guns out there and most of them are in the hands of the preppers and survivalists. Those kinds of people would shoot the troops before they gave up their guns. While your goal is laudable, it's not doable. We have cleanup work to do that will last 20 years or more, if we use our military to do it. If they out rounding up firearms, you can double the time it would take to do the cleanup."

"Why not use your Special Forces?"

"Mr. President, that's a page right out of John Ross's book."

"What book?"

Unintended Consequences.

"Haven't read it, what's it about?"

“One man takes on our government single-handed at first and later with a small amount of help. By the time he was through with the government, every gun law in the country had been repealed, or would be.”

“The NRA had what, 4 million members?”

“We don’t know they won’t let us look at their membership records. That’s probably a safe estimate.”

“Clinton managed to ban assault weapons, why can’t we pick them up?”

“His ban expired and the real ban was the Executive Order issued by George Herbert Walker Bush, banning the import of certain semi-autos and so forth.”

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In a way, we were over gunned, as opposed to out gunned. Go figure, we had a TAC-50, two M40A1s, one Winchester model 70 and about four dozen M1A/M14s. Plus, we had 30 M16A3s. Not counting the children, we numbered twelve adults with an average of 6.8 long arms each, not counting the handguns. The Brady Campaign wanted the handguns, didn’t they? If it were up to the Brady Campaign, our soldiers would be using spears.

“Sam, do you intend to maintain a watch this long after the war?”

“I’ve thought about it Gene and have come to the conclusion that if we drop the watch, we’ll probably be attacked, but if we maintain it, we probably won’t.”

“So you favor maintaining the watch?”

“For the time being, yes. What I’d like to do is look around other locations and see what we could salvage.”

“Well, I’m not certain I agree with your logic, it seems to be reversed, starting with the goal and working backward through the process components – answering the question, *How will we accomplish this? Or alternatively, What must happen in each preceding step to reach our goals?*”

“That’s what I said, wasn’t it?”

“Your goal being avoiding being attacked?”

“Right, been there, done that, got two T-shirts and not so coincidentally 30 M16A3s.”

“Which you don’t like.”

Bad Times – Chapter 14

“Do you?”

“It’s what we had; this arms procurement business is complicated.”

“So McNamara ditched a million perfectly good weapons because plastic was cheaper?”

“Right, over the objection of Army officers who had backed the M14. Though production of the M14 was officially discontinued, some disgruntled troops still managed to hang on to them while deriding the M16 as a frail and underpowered *Mattel toy or poodle shooter*. The M14 is the rifle used by Marine Designated Marksmen.”

“It’s just a shame we can’t mount the M203 on the M14s. Once the Assault Weapons Ban of 1994 was passed, banning (among other features) bayonet lugs, the M1A no longer shipped with a bayonet lug. Although the 1994 law expired in September 2004, making bayonet lugs legal again (in most states), Springfield Armory has not restored that feature. The California Assault Weapons Ban, which went into effect January 1, 2000, prohibited flash hiders on all Semi-automatic rifles capable of accepting a detachable magazine. As a result, Springfield Armory designed a muzzle brake, which they installed in place of the standard flash hider on all models that were sold to California. The irony is that the muzzle brake reduces the recoil of the rifle and thus makes it more accurate. Apparently, the military has ordered the California Legal muzzle brakes from Springfield Armory for their surplus M14's because of the improvement in accuracy.”

“If they did, I must have missed that appropriation.”

“Since you agree with my position on maintaining a watch, would you agree to keep the same schedule?”

“You mean one four hour shift per day for each of the adult men? That seems reasonable; it would eliminate a lot of walking out to the guard post and back. Plus it would allow the majority to work in the garden.”

“That another point I wanted to bring up, the size of our garden.”

“Two and one half acres isn’t enough?”

“About the only thing we have for trade goods is guns and ammo. I’d sure as hell hate to trade some firearms to someone and have them turn around and use them on us to get what we grow.”

“You built this up one piece at a time, didn’t you?”

“Gene, we were going to Costco and Sam’s Club buying what we could afford, which wasn’t much. The prices were going through the roof for food along with gasoline. Then the layoffs began, first Ruth and then me. The boss offered me that golden handshake and I discussed it with Ruth and took it. It worked to be about what I would have gotten from the long term disability policy the company offered the employees. We took to gardening and scraped by for quite some time. Then when Sarah and Bill came we had two families living here. Next, Ron got laid off and it began to look bleak. Lucky for us both boys found jobs in Fresno and car pooled. At one point in time, we had literally a ton of that Jasmine rice from Thailand. It cost more but it was worth the price. I like all kinds of beans and we had an assortment, but the bulk of them were pinto beans because they were available.”

“Did they give you gas?”

“Only at first, your stomach adjusts. To round out the protein, you add corn in the form of tortillas or cornbread. You want a little spice, add a couple of chili peppers. We bought chickens and butchered them but didn’t get into those roosters until, well, you know they came when Ron and Cindy got back from Reno. There’s only one problem with that diet, it’s about the most boring thing you can eat.”

“What did you do about that?”

“Baked bread and boiled beans on Saturday and then made goulash on Wednesdays.”

“Hungarian goulash?”

“American goulash, elbow macaroni, ground beef, onions and tomatoes. It’s better if you get the large elbows rather than the small elbows.”

“Didn’t you ever vary it?”

“Made tuna and noodle casserole sometimes and occasionally a beef stew. We were busy trying to round out our armory in case the economy went totally bust and food riots erupted. It would have happened too, if China hadn’t attacked.”

“You’re describing shelf stable foods, right?”

“Well, dried pasta would probably last 100 years if you could keep it dry. If you buy wheat and store it in those 6-gallon pails with an oxygen absorber, it will last almost forever. You can either store dent corn or popcorn; you end up with the same corn meal after you put them through your grinder. Remember how Emeril Lagasse was always making cracks about the spices people had in their cabinets?”

“I didn’t watch the cooking shows.”

“He was promoting using fresh herbs and spices and suggested that if a spice was old, it wasn’t any good. We’ve got sealed bottles of spices that are several years old; they only begin to go bad when you open them.”

“But you have an herb garden and raise things like chili peppers.”

“We raise about four different varieties of the hot peppers plus green yellow and red. They’re the same pepper, just more mature.”

“I’ve got to run, Sam, same schedule as before?”

“You bet, thanks Gene.”

Reverse logic? I suppose if he says so. Wishing against hope would be more like it. I read something attributed to the current *smartest man in the world*. *I believe that life on Earth is at an ever increasing risk of being wiped out by a disaster such as sudden nuclear war, a genetically engineered virus, or other dangers.* – Stephen Hawking

A person could list all possible disasters and still miss some. Hawking seemed to think WW III was the most likely and it seems like he’d been right. Of course, you have to worry about a man who is on the Board of Sponsors of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists. The Sword of Damocles is frequently used in allusion, epitomizing the imminent and ever-present peril faced by those in positions of power. More generally, it is used to denote the sense of foreboding engendered by the precarious situation, especially one in which the onset of tragedy is restrained only by a delicate trigger or chance. Moreover, it can be seen as a lesson in the importance of fully understanding another person’s situation or experience.

How long had we lived under the sword, since the late ‘40s, early ‘50s? It didn’t go away when the wall fell and there always seemed to be someone who wanted to join the Club. North Korea had a fizzle and eventually backed down. However, Iran had a mad-man as President and he was bound and determined to destroy Israel. I don’t see why, they’d merely reclaimed land taken from them that they stole from the Canaanites.

I passed my time on guard duty engrossed in thoughts such as these. I positioned myself so regardless of how deep I was in thought, I’d see anyone coming. It might have been better to have two of us on guard duty at once, but that meant involving our wives and they were already busy putting up another years’ worth of food. Help was only a radio call away and they never had to expose themselves to gunfire or whatever happened because of that trench. Spare ammo and ordnance was spread out along the trench so none of us had to carry our full supply. Although my Tac Force vest would hold 14 magazines, I actually put smoke grenades in one grenade pouch and fragmentation in the other pouch, limiting me to eight magazines in the vest and one more in my rifle.

Gene asked my opinion of Glocks and I told him he might as well have one if he was going to use a Mattel rifle. I have nothing against Glocks, I've never owned one and would never buy one; I like the feel of the 1911. I know you can get Glocks in .45acp, that's not the point; John Browning didn't invent the Glock. I could justify the M1A because it was an upgraded Garand and Garand helped develop it. And, although it had the shortest period as being our official military firearm, they're still using M14s 50 years later.

About four weeks later, the garden was beginning to come in; Ron had guard duty and announced over the radio we had company.

"Copy, what do you have?"

"Military; it appears to be two uparmored Hummers. Each has a gunner, driver and a crew of three."

"What kind of machineguns do they have mounted?"

"Her Highness."

"Ok, we'll man the Mk19 and the Ma Deuces and the rest of us will come in via the trench. See if you can get them to hold up while we get there. Tell them you radioed for someone in charge."

"I'll give it my best shot, but if they won't stop, you'll probably have to take them out."

I really didn't want to get into a battle with the military, they could get reinforcements and we couldn't.

"What about that Colonel Allen?"

"That was different; Obama hasn't sent anyone back, has he?"

We had to gather our things and traverse a ways in the trench to get to Ron. We had been doing chores and working in the garden, consequently we were all dressed in jeans and work shirts. Sarah, Cindy and Debbie were up in the second floor windows with their rifles and Carol was manning the fifty. Ruth, of course was manning the Mk19. From all appearances, we were outnumbered by about 2:1. In actual fact, the odds were even or a bit in our favor with three snipers to none.

"Help you?"

"California National Guard. The Governor has us out seeing how many people survived."

“He’s about two years late, Sergeant. We have 12 adults and several children and we’re doing fine.”

The Sergeant looked at Gene and asked, “Don’t I know you?”

“Could be, I’m a retired General.”

“Pentagon, right?”

“The Pentagon is a pile of ash, Sergeant.”

“General Brown?”

“That’s my name but I’d rather you not tell anyone you found me, the president has a contract out on me.”

“Made him that mad?”

“You have no idea. So what’s the deal, you fellas out taking a census and picking up the firearms?”

“You sound just like the Governor. No sir, we’re taking a census, but aren’t picking up firearms. Is that a fifty off in the distance?”

“Also have an Mk19 covering you.”

“You seem to be prepared to repel invaders.”

“Before my family and I arrived, the residents here took on 30 bad guys armed with A3s and took them all out.”

“National Guard A3s?”

“Probably, but we’re keeping them,” I replied.

“Fine by me, not my property. How many children?”

“Close enough to call it four?”

“Sixteen people. Ok, they’re doing what they can to provide rations, do you need any?”

“Not at the moment, no.”

“Survivalists?”

“Preppers. We had some food and grew more. We are keeping even with the curve, but don’t have any excess.”

“Who is the head of the family here?”

“That’s me, Sam George.”

“Mr. George, it might be better if you folks avoid Fresno for the moment, we’re having trouble there with the people who think it’s our job to provide their entitlements.”

“We always do Sergeant.”

“They’re having one hell of a time getting power restored, so you won’t have any for several months yet.”

“No problem, we have standby power.”

“I should have known. Almost totally self-sufficient, huh?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“It’s been two years so you’re either using propane or diesel and nobody stores a two year supply of propane or diesel. Kettleman City or NAS Lemoore?”

“Someplace like that.”

I considered that in his conversational way, the Sergeant had elicited a lot of information. Telling him we’d taken on 30 attackers also warned him that he was only seeing the tip of the iceberg as far as our abilities went. We were honest with him, maybe not the best idea we ever had, but the gunners in the Hummers had leaned back and weren’t manning the M2HBs on the Hummers. I took that to mean that they considered this to be friendly territory. And, up to a point, it was friendly territory. It would remain friendly territory until they decided we had something they wanted and tried to take it.

“Do you think they’ll be back?”

“I don’t know that Sam and I doubt they will. I doubt we’ll see them for a while, if they’re out checking the area for survivors and doing some sort of census. I wouldn’t count on any aid from them; it’s just as well you told them we didn’t need any.”

“We don’t need any Gene. With what we’re growing here, we might have some to sell or trade.”

“I can’t think of anything we need, what would you trade for?”

“How about precious metals? I don’t have a boatload like you do. Besides, you paid for the Tac-50 and if it’s mine, I’d like to repay you.”

“You’ve paid for it several times over; you gave us a place to live, provided food, hell, I can’t list all the things you’ve done for us.”

“You reciprocated with two trips to Barstow, so we’re still not even.”

“I did it because I/we could, that’s all. You didn’t really expect the military to abandon two supply depots, did you? Any place any of the services had large stores of supplies were at the top of our list. We didn’t know if China’s attack was part of something larger or not in the beginning. It appears now that it was not. That said, I’ll admit I was surprised when the same ruse worked twice with minor changes in the approach.”

“What do you mean by something larger?”

“Did China have an amphibious force sailing here to invade once the radiation died down? Was Russia aware of China’s plans and planning its own invasion? Why hadn’t China started it off with a HEMP attack? We presented him with the information as soon as we put it together and he just sat on it, like it was an egg he was trying to hatch.”

“But surely you put forth plans for how to deal with the situation.”

“We made the mistake of outlining the alternatives. He couldn’t decide and when some of us suggested that he should forget the alternatives and do something, anything, he wouldn’t let us. Then came the guns thing and you know the rest.”

“I think I would have liked to see the look on his face when you laid the resignation on his desk.”

“He just sat there with his usual dumb look on his face, not believing that anyone would dare defy him.”

“And Colonel Allen?”

“Looking to make Brigadier. Say Sam, did you believe those Guardsmen; you asked me if I thought they’d be back?”

“That’s mostly why I asked. California has the State Military Reserve, our state Defense Force, and they didn’t show up. Now, over two years later, California National Guard shows up and is only looking for a head count? I know he pumped me for information, but he was slick. He did pretty good getting information from you, too.”

“You’re right; maybe we should increase the guard to two people at all times and reallocate our resources so when they come back, we’re a step ahead of them. We could do

more pre-positioning and switch from practice load to combat load in the 50s. What I wouldn't give for GAU-8 or GAU-12, right now. I'd even settle for a Bushmaster M242."

"Those are big heavy guns and they fire a lot of ammo in a short time, especially those GAU Gatling guns. They'd be awkward too, isn't the GAU-8 about 13' long?"

"They build the airplane around the gun. Once completed, the GAU-8 represents some 16% of the A-10 aircraft's unladen weight."

"Whatever, we can't get any of them and if we could we wouldn't have ammo for the guns. Unless you think you can scam MCLB Barstow again."

"I said I'd love to have one, not that I could get us one. Unless we had a sudden population explosion, we don't need more guns."

"Right and if a Platoon of soldiers shows up sans weapons, we could equip them with our extra M14s and A3s."

"Could we recruit a Platoon?"

"What do you mean, high school kids that we'd have to train?"

"I was thinking of veterans who had the training but lacked the weapons."

"Gene, there are probably a couple of Platoons of veterans in the area, but recruiting them might be difficult, if not impossible."

"That depends on what the Guard is really doing, doesn't it? If they're using the same song and dance about a census and using it as a basis for food distribution, when they don't start handling out food, they'll lose their credibility and with it create an angry group of civilians."

"I'll have no part of a rebellion."

"Neither will I; however, it might be interesting to organize a march on Sacramento and try to force the government to come up with that food, especially since we don't need it."

I thought the suggestion of veterans without weapons was ludicrous. Like we could put an ad in the Fresno Bee asking for *volunteers wanted for a private militia, prior service mandatory, weapons and ammo supplied.*

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We increased the guard duty but were limited to our available resources. The Tac-50 went into a second story bedroom with Sarah as gunner. She used her laser rangefinder and wrote the distances to the various locations in her notebook. She then fired test

shots and registered the big heavy gun. The rifle was cleaned, the magazines loaded and everything was kept right next to the window. If Sarah couldn't get to it, there was Cindy, Debbie or Carol. Down in the trench we had coordinated fields of fire.

"If they come back and are up to no good, tell the sniper to put a round in the driver's windshield."

"Will it penetrate the windshield?"

"The windshield is only rated to provide protection against 7.62 armor piercing ammo so it should. It depends in part on how square the projectile hits the window."

"That means we can stop them, for a time at least."

"It may depend on what they have for reinforcements."

They returned two weeks later, still driving M1114s, but one had a fifty and the second an Mk19. We got the radio call and were half way down the ditch by the time the Hummers pulled to a stop. Gene and I each grabbed a LAW and continued to advance on the Hummers.

"You're back, census finished?"

"Actually, we came back to pick up the A3s. We've determined that they belonged to the Fresno National Guard unit."

"It wasn't the National Guard that attacked us. I told you those weapons are now ours, the spoils of war."

"Our Company commander said we were to use all available resources to recover them."

"Is he with you?"

"He's in Fresno."

"We're not surrendering the A3s to you Sergeant. The only way you'll get them is to take them. That's not a challenge, it's simply a fact. Don't you have something better to do that worry about 30 rifles?"

"Thirty? We were told there were 94 rifles missing."

"There could be for all I know, we recovered 30 and since they were used to attack us, we're keeping them."

“That last time we were here, you said you had machineguns. Were you bluffing or do you really have them?”

“We’d be glad to demonstrate, which vehicle do you want to give up?”

“Neither one.”

“We don’t even need a machinegun to take out your Hummers, they’re not bullet proof.”

“I’d like to see that.”

“Sarah, one round through the passenger side windshield of the lead Hummer.”

There was a pop from the house and the passenger windshield exploded as the HEIAP round struck and penetrated.

“That was just our sniper, how well do Hummers do against a Ma Deuce loaded with Raufoss?”

“You don’t have Raufoss.”

“Sarah, one round through the driver’s side windshield of the lead Hummer.”

There was a pop from the house and the driver’s windshield exploded as the HEIAP round struck and penetrated.

“We have more.”

“I’ll take your word for it.”

“You’d better think up something to tell that Captain ‘cause if you come back, you won’t be leaving unless it’s in the back of a truck.”

“Next thing you’ll tell me is that you have AP for your rifles.”

“Nope, but we have both the ball/tracer mix and the AP/APIT mix for the 50s. Pretty good rounds for the 40mm too. Easy enough to use the links we have to make up belt of Raufoss.”

Meanwhile, the gunner in the second Hummer had seen where Sarah was shooting from and fired the MK19 at the window. That was the straw that broke the Camel’s back and we cut them down, using LAW rockets followed by hand grenades. The LAW must travel a minimum distance before it arms, 10 meters, and Bill and Tom was about fifty feet away. I was angry and let the others implement the standing order, El Degüello.

Their heavy weapons, the M2HB and the Mk19 weren't badly damaged and only required minor repairs. We also recover some M4s and one M9. I rushed to the house to check on Sarah. She had seen the gunner point the Mk19 her way and had run for cover. Another second or two, she might have made it. The grenades struck around the window and one penetrated the window and exploded in the bedroom. She was struck by fragments from the window and metal fragments from the grenade.

Bad Times – Chapter 15

She was alive and moaning, hopefully a good sign. We laid her on the bed in a spare bedroom and started to treat the wounds. The splinters of wood were the easy part; we plucked them like you'd pluck a chicken. Once the splinter was removed we applied a liberal dose of hydrogen peroxide. She had one wound in her right shoulder blade that wasn't a wood splinter. She'd been struck by a piece of the shrapnel from the grenade and it was buried tight against and partly through her shoulder blade.

Shirley was working on her trying to remove the metal fragment and stop her blood loss. She said that ideally, Sarah should be medevaced to a trauma hospital. Since that wasn't an option, she'd do what she could and we should get on our knees and ask for Divine intervention. Sarah's back was a bloody mess, not counting the wound that Shirley was working on.

"I got it. I'll debride the wound and we'll suture. What do you have in the way of antibiotics?"

"We only have pills, mostly Cipro and Doxy. I think we have some Keflex too. Our doctor wouldn't prescribe any IV antibiotics."

"Don't worry about it Sam, we'll make do. I'm worried about MRSA with all these open wounds on her back. That's got it, let's clean her up and put some antibiotic cream in her wounds. Do you have Neosporin?"

"I'll get you a tube."

By the time Shirley was finished, Sarah's Band-Aids had Band-Aids. The shrapnel wound was covered by a dressing to absorb any blood that might leak and Shirley had fashioned a drain tube of sorts. Sarah had been unconscious throughout the medical treatment and still wasn't awake. Shirley said not to worry just yet, her eyes were equal and reactive and the shock of the wounds had probably rendered her unconscious. Shirley asked how old the Doxy was and I responded we'd had before the war. She told me it was expired and we had to dump it.

The others had stripped the Hummers and towed them to another location down near NAS Lemoore. The bodies were unceremoniously dumped in the two vehicle shells. About the only thing we gained beyond the weapons were 8 ACHs. Their body armor was riddled with holes and unusable. I was half listening to their report when Shirley announced, "She's awake."

"How are you doing Pumpkin?"

"It's hurts. Where's Bill, is he ok?"

“He’s fine and will be here in just a minute. It looks like we’re going to have to remodel the house.”

We checked out the Tac-50 and aside from a few scratches, it was fine. I wish the same could be said for the house. The younger men set about removing the remaining siding and determining what it would take to repair the house. I had a good idea, 2x4s, insulation, a new window and siding at a minimum plus paint to match. In less time than I could imagine, they had it striped and were headed to Fresno to one of the closed up lumberyards.

In the aftermath of the war, some places, like Home Depot, managed to reopen their doors. There was no building going on at all and only small amounts of materials were needed, usually for home repairs. The lumberyards hadn’t bothered to reopen their doors and had, instead, taken on the role of supplier to places like Home Depot. The boys had salvaged the window frame and only needed to replace the glass, much to my surprise.

“There are some nicks in the frame, but we’ll fill them in with plastic wood and sand them after they dry. You won’t even see them after we paint.”

“Did you match the siding? I don’t want any outward sign that the house was damaged. That’s in case the CNG shows up again. They couldn’t mistake the damage those grenades caused.”

“Give us a day or two and you won’t know the house was damaged, the siding is a perfect match.”

“You found clapboard? Was it real wood or that cheap plastic imitation?”

“Real wood; the lumberyard had one bundle which is enough to make the repair.”

The emphasis was on the outside repair, for the sake of appearance, but they got some dry wall to cover the inside too. I think Ruth had a couple of rolls of wallpaper leftover from the last time she papered. It took the better part of a week before the repairs were finished and the wall papered. In that interval, Sarah developed a minor fever that went away on its own, probably owing to the effect of the antibiotics. She only put up with the liquid/soft diet for about three days.

“Sarah is pregnant again and says she’s about 6 weeks along.”

“Did you tell Shirley, she should know that when she treats Sarah.”

“I did and she says it shouldn’t be a problem.”

“Gonna grow a herd of grandchildren for us?”

“We have a good start. Cindy isn’t far behind, given her late start. Will a dozen be enough?”

“Each or altogether?”

“Altogether.”

“Fine, but you’ll need bunk beds.”

“Do you think the CNG will be back?”

“For sure; they’ll be looking for where their troops were when they were killed.”

“We need a better place to setup the sniper.”

“I was thinking about putting the sniper on the pole barn. Might be inconvenient getting up and down, but we have extra tin siding. Maybe you boys can construct a shooting platform on the backside.”

◦

“Sam, our main problem is that we don’t have enough people to properly defend the acreage. I believe you could feed many more people with the available land and perhaps annex those five acres across the road. Who do they belong to?”

“I don’t know – some buyer from San Francisco who bought it as a bug out place. He must have run onto hard times, after he got the well put in, everything stopped and he didn’t make any further improvements.”

“If he had survived the war, wouldn’t you have expected him here by now?”

“You would have thought so.”

“It’s fenced, right?”

“Sure is.”

“Why not run your cattle over there and get more cattle? It looks like it has a good stand of grass.”

“I’ll have to think on it Gene, I’m not totally sure where to get more cattle.”

The question resolved itself when I brought it up at a family dinner. Tom, Ron, Bill and Sean had all seen cattle feeding themselves in pastures. They seemed certain they could find an abandoned farm. I asked how that could be and the pointed out the cattle

with grass probably had automatic watering. I suggested that salvage would be ok but not to start looting.

They found cattle, hogs, chickens, ducks and rabbits. I told them to turn the rabbits loose, no way was I going to eat rabbit. They decided to keep them as pets. A German Shepherd is a pet, as is a Rottweiler, a Doberman or several other large breeds. A cat makes a nice house pet and keeps the mice away. A rabbit is what you hunt with your .22 and then eat because you killed it. I don't hunt rabbits at all and we had no squirrels.

They brought back steers, cows, heifers and one bull. There were about 25 sows and two boars. They found plenty of chickens but needed coops or cages to bring them and the ducks back. Our garden was coming in and we had more food than we could possibly can so we butchered a steer and a couple of barrows and took the meat and a large quantity of produce to a Farmer's market. We got request for rabbit and that solved that issue once and for all. Well, we kept a breeding pair. We sold the beef and pork as primal cuts, if they wanted bacon or ham, they could make their own.

A vast majority of what we received in return was pre-65 90% silver coins with someone occasionally having a fractional gold coin. I set my gold price at \$1,500 an ounce and silver at \$30 an ounce, maintaining the 50 to 1 ratio in price. Gene's family took their pay for the work in provisions. I had set the price on the produce slightly high, planning on reducing it. However, we had the lowest prices there and I resolved to raise our prices slightly the next time we went to town. We cleared around \$1,800.

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"Mr. President, with due consideration, we have determined we can't pick up the firearms."

"Why not?"

"As I suggested, there are simply too many. It would take our entire military many years to collect them."

Flustered, he started to rant, then rave. He insisted he could do anything he wanted to do. His Secret Service detail became alarmed at his ongoing rant and called a physician who sedated him. That was interesting because the doctor said that, for the moment, he was unable to discharge the duties of his office. Biden assumed his duties.

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We butchered another steer and four hogs. We got the hams and bacon going because it seemed like we were always out of ham and/or bacon. With this large of herd of livestock, we could easily afford to butcher and sell some. We took live chickens in a cage to sell; they could butcher their own chickens. That second trip, we took all but the breeding pair of rabbits. We also took many of the ducks in a cage. When it was all said

and done, we'd sold over \$3,000 worth of food, net. (We had a sign posted offering to buy pint and quart mason jars and we must have gotten 400. Some were probably mayonnaise jars, but they'd work for high acid foods.)

"Most commercial pint- and quart-size mayonnaise or salad dressing jars may be used with new two-piece lids for canning acid foods in a water bath canner. However, you should expect more seal failures and jar breakage. These jars have a narrower sealing surface, are tempered less than Mason jars, and may be weakened by repeated contact with metal spoons or knives used in dispensing mayonnaise or salad dressing. Seemingly insignificant scratches in glass may cause cracking and breakage while processing jars in a canner. Mayonnaise-type jars are not recommended for use with foods to be processed in a pressure canner because of excessive jar breakage. Other commercial jars with mouths that cannot be sealed with two-piece canning lids are not recommended for use in canning food at home."

"We're malting some barley, trying to come up with some homebrew."

"You grew barley?"

"Yep."

"What about hops?"

"We have a hop garden that started with a single plant. We can use even more hops than Sam Adams."

"Don't make it bitter. Say, do you have brewer's yeast?"

"Sure do, it is *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, also known as baker's yeast. That's ale yeast and I don't have any lager yeast, *Saccharomyces uvarum*. It will still make home brew."

"What about bottles?"

"We'll pick up a few cases of empties from a tavern and I have a hand capper."

"Doing well on your sales in town?"

"Oh yeah, I could get used to this. We pulled in \$4,800 net in two trips. Not much gold, but plenty of 90% silver coins. I'll have to find someone in Fresno to convert the silver into gold."

"What are you doing with it now?"

"Rolling it using coin tubes I picked up in town."

"How does that breakdown?"

“Penny rolls have 50 coins: \$0.50 value; Nickel rolls have 40 coins: \$2.00 value; Dime rolls have 50 coins: \$5.00 value; Quarter rolls have 40 coins: \$10.00 value; Half Dollar rolls have 20 coins: \$10.00 value; and, Dollar rolls have 25 coins: \$25.00 value. I’m only getting dimes, quarters and halves. The gold I’ve gotten has been one-tenth and one-quarter ounce.”

“American gold or Krugerrand?”

“A little of both. I didn’t know they imported many of the partial Krugerrands.”

“They have more recently, once South Africa ended Apartheid. What do you see more of?”

“The fractional Krugerrands. I guess they had a lower premium than the American Eagle or the Canadian Maple Leaf.”

“That’s why I bought them, the lower premium.”

“But they’re still a full measure of gold?”

“The same content as the American Eagle, except with a lower premium, usually about 1%.”

“At the rate we’re going, I’ll be able to pay you for the rifle by the end of the growing season, if you take the money.”

“We’ll see, I don’t need it and I told you the rifle was yours. If you can’t find someone to convert your silver into gold, I might take some of it off your hands. I think it would be better to keep it circulation, have you tried a banker?”

“No, but they’re a greedy bunch and probably would want a large fee to convert the silver into gold.”

“You won’t know until you ask, Sam. They could be running low on 90% silver coins.”

I waited until after our third market day, a highly successful day resulting in \$3,250 in sales, to finish rolling the coins before I headed to the jewelry store that was our unofficial banker. I inquired about both gold and silver and learned he had ample gold but little silver. I told him I had rolled 90% silver coins and would trade it for gold at the 50:1 price ratio based on \$1,500 gold. He wanted a discount and I told him no, add a premium when he sold since he was probably already doing that.

The trade was made and I got 14.3 ounces of gold for my \$1,000 face value of silver, giving that to add to my small gold store. Altogether, we had 16.1 ounces of gold. It sure didn’t seem like much when compared to the heavy bag of silver. The guy in the jewelry

store was taking a big risk, assuming that the full faith and credit of the US meant anything.

Sarah was healing, albeit slowly. Her back would never be the same and she wouldn't be wearing a two piece bathing suit anytime soon. We were well into fall and made our fourth and final trip to town. We were well stocked and sold over \$5,000 worth of food and meat. One lady with two kids told me her husband had been in Los Angeles the day the balloon went up. She looked like she only went 90-pounds and her kids were skin and bones. I took her off to the side and told her to come back at the end of the day; I had some food for her. She said she couldn't pay and I told her it didn't matter, I was just doing my Christian duty.

I sat aside a pail of beans, rice and a third of cornmeal. I had a spare Coleman stove and 5-gallons of fuel I added to the food. I also pulled out the only oil lamp I had with me and a five gallon yellow can of kerosene. The sales were brisk the remainder of the day and she showed up just as we were packing the tables. I told her to hop in and Ruth and I would take her home. When we got there, we unloaded the things I had set aside. You could have knocked her over with a feather. I told her that it might not take her through the winter, but I was the best we could do. Then, she mentioned that this was a rough neighborhood and she feared for herself and her children.

"I'll be back," I told her in my best Arnold voice.

When we got home, I got one of the M4s, the M9 we'd recently recovered and ammo for both plus extra magazines and cleaning supplies. Ruth and I plus Sarah and Bill returned to town. We also took some home canned food and a second pail each of beans, rice and corn meal, enough to see her through until spring. Bill and Sarah were closer to her age and they spent an hour or more instructing the woman on the use of the weapons. Funny thing was we never got her name, and never told her ours.

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I more or less got the cheddar process figured out and produced a batch of cheddar cheese. I much prefer my pepper Jack or Colby so I made small amounts of those. The weather was about normal for a nuclear winter until we got a big winter storm in March. According to the US National Weather Service, winds of 35 mph or more and visibility of .25 miles or less are conditions that, if they endure for three hours, define a blizzard.

The low visibility lasted a full week and the winds were about 40mph gusting to as much as 55mph. Mixed in that was snow, to the tune of 27". May I remind you that we're in the heart of the Big Valley? We strung a rope from the house to the pole barn and another from the pole barn to the trailers. We had minutes and hours of total whiteout. We'd gathered the livestock when it looked like it might snow and they were ok, if not a little cold in the pole barn. Thank God we hadn't gotten horses; they were a lot more work than cattle or hogs. We stayed in touch on channel 9 and shared duties with the livestock, everyone getting a turn.

God didn't rest until the eighth day in this case and it turned very cold with temperatures below zero and just a little steady wind. I had a chart I'd copied from Wiki on wind chill factors and as near as I could tell it was about -16°F (0°F, 10mph). It would take time to clear off all the snow using shovels, the loader and the blade. We didn't hurry because if someone got overheated and came down with a cold, we didn't have much to fight pneumonia. At least we could suspend guard duty until the roads were plowed.

I guess I should have said until the roads melted, one look at the roads was all I needed to tell me that we couldn't clean them. Gene agreed and said, *The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.* – Job 1: 20-21 (KJV) It had been that way before the war but when he said it, it finally dawned on me that it took more than preparations and good luck to get to this point in time.

- We had enough food for everyone, whenever it was needed.
- When we need weapons you couldn't get in a store, they were provided.
- When we were in danger of being overrun, we prevailed.
- Food grew in the garden despite the nuclear winter.
- Livestock was around and had survived until we located it.
- There was several years' worth of fuel in Kettleman City.

Gene was more right than he knew; the Lord had most certainly given. It also occurred to me that I didn't know that woman with the children and neither did anyone on the acreage, but she was in need and I/we had been moved to help her/them. Maybe that was the way we were expected to pay the Lord back, by helping others, especially people who had nothing. How would the Lord feel about us giving her an M4 and an M9? Probably not too bad, the Commandment was, *Thou shall not murder* as opposed to *Thou shall not kill*.

At no time since Gene and Shirley had moved here had the subject of religion come up, I'd assumed that the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was probably a Christian, but there all kinds of Christians, from Catholics to Baptists and most anything in between. I was always taught it was rude to bring up politics and/or religion lest you start an argument and we were so busy surviving, religion never came up.

We had more or less salvaged things, like generators, fuel, and mostly requisitioned ordnance and ammo, etc. We'd even purchased the Tac-50 rifle rather than stealing it, mark that on our side. Of course, we bent a few laws when we acquired LAWs, grenades, machineguns and so forth. I sometimes think that the state Assembly voted in those laws just so we could break them; many of them were downright stupid. Never mind the federal Assault Weapon Ban, that wasn't good enough, California had to have its own and it was far more restrictive. If you wanted a good main battle rifle than you had to illegally import large capacity magazines, your best bets were the Mini-14 and its big brother the M1A. PMI made good 30-round magazines for the Mini-14 and Taiwan made good T-57 magazines for the M1A that were widely available, many for under \$20 each. You just needed a friend who lived in the United States.

The snow would provide good subsoil moisture for our garden and it was yet another of God's blessings. Precipitation removed any residual radiation from the air and we made sure to check the soil before we planted with the Geiger counter. None was detected so the level had to be very low. Besides, the younger generation seemed to be producing children with no apparent physical problems.

"What say we plant all of the acreage besides the homestead into a garden this year and move the livestock across the road?"

"Wasn't that what I suggested last year?"

"Yes you did Gene, but I was thinking about that lady with the two kids we helped and would like to be able to help more people in her situation."

"You don't really have enough land to get into full scale truck farming."

"I know, and you're right. We seem to be gaining more children here and there must be a few people like that woman."

"What don't you offer to let her work in the garden in exchange for a portion of the food? It would make her feel like she was contributing and allow her to preserve her self-respect. Most people don't like to beg, regardless of the circumstances. Plus she might know a couple of other people in the same circumstance who would be willing to work for food."

"I like it. It would free us up to maintain an active security force, just in case."

"What's on your mind the National Guard?"

"Them and that jerk in the White House out looking for you."

"We haven't seen anyone since David Allen; I believe we're past that. Who knows, maybe he isn't still in charge. Do we still monitor the NOAA channels?"

"All the time, but the only thing we ever get is weather forecasts and they're usually wrong, why?"

"If the government has a message, it's usually sent via the EAS and NOAA weather radio. We should maintain the radio watch."

My fellow Americans,

Recently, competent medical authority confirmed that the President, is incapable of discharging his duties. Accordingly, I have assumed his duties until he is certified as competent to resume those duties.

I will make a weekly broadcast outlining our efforts to restore this great nation to its former self.

Thank you and good night.

“What? Gene you don’t mean that, he was telling him what to do?”

“Unless I’m terribly mistaken, that’s exactly what I’m saying.”

“What’s going to happen now?”

“He’ll consolidate his power; reduce the number of troops doing cleanup and go for the guns.”

“I thought that was Obama.”

“Biden wrote the Weapons ban. They are of like minds on the issue.”

“He may order it, but I don’t think the American soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines will go along with that. Their oath is to protect and defend the Constitution.”

“Seems to me I made the same argument a couple of years back; that ended up with him sending Colonel David Allen to take me out. Would you surrender your guns?”

“Never, we’re all guaranteed to right to keep and bear arms.”

“Do you know the history of the 2nd Amendment?”

“Part of the Bill of Rights?”

“Not originally, no. The original text of what was to become the Second Amendment, as brought to the floor of the US House of Representatives of the first session of the First Congress was: *The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed; a well-armed and well-regulated militia being the best security of a free country; but no person religiously scrupulous of bearing arms shall be compelled to render military service in person.* It was intended to be included in Article I, section 9 between clauses 3 and 4. If they had done that, we wouldn’t have any argument of the right to keep and bear arms.”

Bad Times – Chapter 16

“And you learned this where?”

“At West Point, in a history class. The oath of office a federal employee takes is different from the obligation of the President. An employee must support and defend the Constitution; the President must preserve, protect and defend the Constitution.”

“I’ll tell you pal, I support and will defend the Constitution, but I don’t think I’ll support and defend all of the laws they passed since.”

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We added people to the acreage, one family at a time, starting with the lady with two kids. Her name was Glenda and the kids’ names were Jim and Sandy. She knew of another family that was as badly off as she had been and she had shared a portion of her food with them. Gene and I made them same offer, work for food. Absent additional mobile homes, we set up bivouac tents with folding cots and a cold water hose plus a single screw in fluorescent fixture. They could use the bathroom in the house and often shared meals with us.

The other woman, Julie had three children Janice, Johnny and Bill. Both the women and their children helped in the garden in exchange for enough food to get them through from harvest until the crops began coming in the following summer. Ruth and Shirley along with Glenda and Julie did the canning and we were redeeming jars beginning with the first trip to the Farmer’s Market. Customers who turned in jars received a 25¢ discount and we paid 25¢ to people selling jars. We went to Fresno six times from the beginning of harvest until the end of harvest when we sold the potatoes, onions and melons. I finally had the money to pay Gene for the Tac-50, but he refused the money.

“I told you the gun was yours; you’ve paid for it several times over. I don’t want to hear it again Sam. Besides, you don’t pull sniper duty, the daughters and daughters-in-law do that. What would you think about inviting Glenda and Julie to live here?”

“Can we find more trailers?”

“Sean spotted some empty trailers that seemed to be in fair condition. He said with a good cleaning, they’d be livable. Can we get by with the three large generators or will we need another?”

“You have the fourth generator powering the house and the rest of the farm. We have five singlewides running off three generators. If we add two singlewides, we’ll need another, but we could actually add three homes and have a total of eight, each with a 100 amp service.”

“So, three trailers, three propane tanks, one generator, wiring and plumbing? I sure hope that septic system is large enough.”

“It should be; we might need to expand the drain field, but there’s perforated pipe in the pole barn.”

“So we can provide space for them, now do you want to invite them to move in?”

“I don’t see why not Gene, but I’d better check with Ruth.”

Ruth had become fast friends with both Glenda and Julie and said it would be nice to have more people on the acreage. If we could find the things we need, she was all for it.

Sean, Tom, Ron and Bill moved the three trailers, picked up the last generator available and got three more propane tanks. They also added another 16,000-gallon tanker of diesel and stabilized it. They had to put in two additional lines to the drain field, run water, connect the generator and install and connect the propane tanks. Gene and I plus Ruth and Shirley approached first Glenda and then Julie outlining the possibility of what we were offering. After some thought, both accepted. We now had a spare trailer for visitors or possibly another family. I figured that was our limit, but the gesture had been worthwhile. The children ranged in age from 13 to 18 and would be added to our security team once they’d received weapons training.

It took a month of constant training before we were totally comfortable with those teenagers having firearms. All of them ended up with an A3 and ample magazines. We ran drills covering how to respond to another attack. It was one of those, *we hope it’s never needed*, training scenarios. My greatest concern was that someone from town had followed us home on one of our trips to the Farmer’s Market. They had to assume that we still had food and were selling off the excess. They also had to conclude that we had a fair amount of gold and silver accumulated.

They could see that most of us were armed with M1A rifles or shotguns and everyone wore some kind of sidearm. What they couldn’t know, without following us, is where we lived and what other defense measures we had available. A defender has a natural advantage, most times. Much of it depends upon the weapons available to the defender, but preparation and position are valuable too. We had the trench and it was well supplied with extra ammo, grenades and rockets. With the teens, we could keep the ladies at the machineguns and still have a reasonable sized fighting force in the trench, if need be. We also taught them a set of hand signals.

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“The doctors seem to think he is getting better, Mr. President. They report he is calm, most of the time, and I’m not sure how much longer we’ll be able to keep him confined.”

“String it out until his term runs out, if you can. We’re going to have a terrible political mess come January 20, 2013 when we haven’t had elections. If I have the support of the military that I’ve been working on, I may appoint myself as acting President until an election can be held.”

“Mr. President, you probably can’t count on more than half of the military, assuming Republicans and Democrats are evenly divided. You’ll get more support if you don’t go after the firearms. It’s vicious out there and we heard multiple reports of families being forced to defend themselves. I was surprised to learn that citizens of California, New Jersey, Hawaii, Illinois, New York and Massachusetts are as well armed the remainder of the country. Word has it that they’re very adept at straw man purchases.”

“See, that’s we have the Brady Bill and had the Assault Weapons Ban. Bush allowed the ban to expire in 2004 and it was probably what got him reelected. Why would anyone need a magazine larger than 10 rounds for hunting?”

“Mr. President, it’s covered in Article I, Section 8, Clause 15 of the Constitution, the militia. It has nothing to do with hunting. Do you know why the Nazis never invaded Switzerland during WW II? Every citizen had training, a weapon and ammo, in their home. In the aftermath of this war, we don’t have the right to tell people that they don’t have the right to defend themselves.”

“Don’t worry about it, I’ll think of something.”

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I’d often wondered how the US military ended up with the M16 when the Ruger Mini-14 was available. Eugene Stoner got there first because Bill Ruger didn’t bring out the Mini-14 until ten years later. The Mini-14 was a scaled down M14, or a scaled down M1A, if you prefer. They had three models originally, the civilian Mini-14, the Mini-14 Government and the AC556. The AC-556 is a selective-fire version of the Mini-14 marketed for military and law enforcement use. The design incorporates a selector on the right/rear of the receiver to select either semi-automatic, 3-round burst or full-automatic fire modes; the manual safety at the front of the trigger guard operates the same as a standard Mini-14. The front sight is winged and incorporates a bayonet lug. The 13" or 18" barrel incorporates a flash suppressor. A folding stock was used on the AC-556F and AC-556K. The rifle came equipped with 20-round magazines and a 30-round version was available for a time. The AC-556 is currently produced, marketed and sold both in the United States and abroad.

It became important when I was offered a Mini-14 in trade for enough food for a family of four to get them through until the next harvest. I told him I didn’t think I could do it and he sweetened the offer. The rifle had a Butler Creek folding stock, not installed, a flash hider with bayonet lug, also not installed, and 16 30-round PMI magazines. I told him I’d think on it and he should come back a little before closing. If I decided to fill his *order* I’d have to get it from supplies we had at home. Then, I mentally added up what he was

offering: rifle \$900, stock \$90, flashhider \$50 and magazines – 16x\$30 for a total of \$1,520 or ~ 1 ounce of gold.

The idea of having a .223 rifle that wouldn't get dirty and clog up on me was downright appealing. Half a lifetime ago, I'd had one of the original Mini-14s all fixed up just like the one he had except it lacked a bayonet lug. I had ten blued 30-round and one stainless 30-round. When he came back, I told him I needed to see his shopping list before I could decide.

"I can't do that much coffee, but I'll add a slab of bacon and one ham. I can throw in beef roasts if you can store them and maybe a pork loin. Would that do it for you?"

"How much coffee can you manage? I wrote down 24 cans, but I'd settle for 12, with the extra meat."

"Give me your address and I'll bring back the food tomorrow and deliver it directly to you. Have the rifle and accessories ready so I can look them over before I unload."

"Then we have a deal?"

"If the rifle is in good condition, yes, we have a deal. Do you have anything left for protection?"

"Just the .223 ammo, but that was my only rifle."

"Ok, I'll throw in an M16A3 with 7 magazines. What do you have for ammo?"

"I bought a case of M855 from Ammoman."

"That's perfect. Are you familiar with the M16?"

"I used one in the Army, a long time back."

"There are some things people never forget. But, if you have any questions, I'll answer them."

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"This rifle is just like new, haven't you shot it?"

"Many times, but I take very good care of it. You seem to favor the M1A, why would you want a Mini-14 when you have A3s?"

"The Mini may be semi-auto, but it is a reliable semi-auto. A long time back, I had one but had to sell it. It was equipped with the folding stock, flashhider and I had quite a few 30-round magazines. I do not like the A3 or any M16, they're a POS and as soon as

they get dirty, they quit firing until you stop and clean them. Since you don't use a rifle often, the A3 may give you good service. Just make sure you keep it clean and if the gas tube gets clogged, use carburetor cleaner on it."

"Will you have more food next year?"

"As long as we have a growing season, we will. I'd have to talk it over with the others but I suppose it's possible we could work something out where you'd work for food."

"You could? Great, my name is William Robinson."

"You weren't of *Danger, Will Robinson, Danger*, fame are you?"

"What are you talking about?"

"It was a TV program from the '60s, *Lost in Space*. Like I said, I'll talk to my people and if they agree I'll come in and let you know. Would you have any objections to moving to our farm?"

"What kind of accommodations?"

"Singlewide mobile home complete with furnishings, propane, electricity, water and septic."

"How much rent?"

"You work in the garden or help with the livestock for your rent and a share of the food."

"Any other expectations?"

"Security, of course, almost everyone is part of our security force including our wives and several teenagers. We're well equipped; in fact we have more equipment than we have equipment operators."

"Who is in charge of your security?"

"Would you believe a four-star General?"

"Right, like you have the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in charge of your security."

"As a matter of fact, we do. It's a long story and I'll fill you in if you move to the farm."

"I know BS when I hear it."

"Do you know who the last Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was?"

“Brown, something Brown.”

“It’s Eugene Brown but his friends call him Gene. He’s originally from Fresno, or did you know that?”

“He retired?”

“He resigned when Obama ordered him to pick up all the firearms in the hands of civilians.”

“Speaking of which, what do you make of that announcement out of Washington that Biden is in charge?”

“It came from Cheyenne Mountain not DC, Washington was wiped out. We don’t know what to think, for some reason, he seems to be out of the loop. He said he was incapacitated, but he didn’t explain what that means. For all we know he’s appointed himself President for life.”

“I never thought I see the day with him in charge.”

“Yeah so much for the 22nd Amendment limiting Presidential terms.”

“He can’t make that stick, the people will revolt.”

“If you were talking about 50 years ago, I might agree. These days with so many liberals and sheeple, I don’t know. By the way, I’m Sam George. We’re working around four acres of garden and have five more for our livestock. Tell me a little about your family Will.”

“There’s my wife Penny and our daughters Maureen and Judy. The girls are 17 and 14.”

“Are you sure you never watched *Lost in Space*? The names are the same as the characters in the TV show.”

“Huh, must be some kind of fluke. You say that you’ve been arming your teens?”

“After they’ve received enough training, yes. My wife Ruth and I have two grown children and some grandchildren. Gene and Shirley also have two grown children; he was an Army officer and she a Coast Guard officer.”

“Could you spare more of the A3s?”

“I’ll come back tomorrow with 3 rifles, a box of magazines and a case or two of M855.”

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It didn't take long to convert the Mini-14 into the configuration I had with my first rifle. There wasn't any part of the rifle that was legal under California law; it had large capacity magazines, a flashhider and a folding, pistol grip stock. More importantly, it wasn't a ranch rifle, having a serial number beginning with 182. For the close up work where I might find myself using the Mini-14, it didn't need a scope. I could carry the Mini, folded up, and the 16 loaded magazines in my BoB that was in the toolbox on my truck as a backup weapon.

"I changed my mind and brought you 3 cases of ammo, giving you one case per rifle. You also now have 13 magazines per rifle and if you can get some ALICE gear from the surplus store you can carry 12 magazines in 4 pouches and one in the rifle. Since you're limited on ammo, I recommend that you only use the rifles in semi-auto."

"Thanks Sam, I'll take your lead and school the ladies before I turn them loose with the rifles. I talked to Penny about the possibility of moving to your farm and she's all for it. When I mentioned canning, she said she had about 100 jars and a full case of lids. She says she knows where she can get more jars, too. It won't be much, but we'll have some things to offer."

"As the saying goes, every little bit helps. I haven't talked to the others yet; most are busy getting ready for winter."

"What's the deal on that? I've seen blizzards up in the Sierra Nevada's, but never in Fresno, until last year."

"It might be the tail end of a nuclear winter or perhaps a major climate change, like the beginning of a new ice age. I saw some shows of the History Channel, or maybe National Geographic, that discussed the possibility of global warming leading to a new ice age. I'm not any better of a weatherman than they have on TV."

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Giant bombs on giant rockets: Project Icarus

by Dwayne A. Day

Monday, July 5, 2004

In the late 1990s, spurred on by the crash of a comet into Jupiter, Hollywood embraced the meteor disaster movie. The films were loud, but forgettable, and Hollywood has since found other disasters to worry about. But over thirty years ago, a group of engineers in training at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology designed a far more realistic defense against a doomsday rock. Their plan would have involved a half-dozen Saturn V rockets carrying some really big bombs.

And the plan probably would not have worked.

Icarus falling

Every nineteen years the large asteroid Icarus swings by planet Earth, often coming within four million miles of the planet – mere spitting distance in astronomical terms. Icarus last passed by Earth in 1997. Before that, its previous approach was in June 1968. We now know that such near-Earth asteroids are not all that rare and in recent years Congress and NASA have shown greater interest in trying to track, and even visit them.

In early 1967, MIT professor Paul Sandorff gave his class of graduate students a task: suppose that instead of passing harmlessly by, Icarus was instead going to hit the Earth. The nearly mile wide chunk of rock would hit the planet with the force of 500,000 megatons – far larger than any major earthquake or volcanic eruption, and over thirty-three thousand times the size of the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima. At a minimum, it would kill millions, flattening buildings and trees for a radius of hundreds of miles, and/or causing huge tidal waves that would wipe out cities along thousands of miles coastline. The dust it kicked into the atmosphere could even lead to a global winter that lasting years. Sandorff posed a simple challenge: You have fifteen months. How do you stop Icarus?

MIT was then deeply involved in the Apollo program. The guidance system for the Apollo spacecraft was developed there and the country's foremost experts in aviation and space walked the school's halls. Sandorff's proposal was intended to teach his students how to improvise under pressure.

The class immediately split up into several working groups based upon their areas of expertise: orbits and trajectories, boosters and propulsion, spacecraft, guidance and control, communications, economics and management, and nuclear payloads. They began evaluating the different options for defeating the killer rock.

Could they launch a big bomb to the asteroid and blow it to pieces? Quick calculations showed that pulverizing a rock the size of Icarus would require a 1,000 megaton bomb. No nuclear weapon even remotely that big had ever been theorized, let alone designed or built. There was no way it could be done in the short time available. Using a bunch of smaller bombs was also not possible because they would all have to be detonated at exactly the same time. Otherwise, one bomb would vaporize the others before they detonated.

Fast intercept

The most desirable option would be to rendezvous with Icarus when it reached aphelion – the slowest point in its orbit – in November 1967. At that point it would be easiest to rendezvous with the asteroid and easiest to exert force to change its orbit. But such a mission would have had to be launched immediately, in spring 1967, and so it was out of the question. The group quickly determined that no rockets could conceivably be readied before 1968 and this greatly constrained their options. A slow rendezvous, or

even a soft landing, was totally out of the question: Icarus would be moving too fast by 1968 for a spacecraft to reach it and then reverse direction for a rendezvous.

The only option was a fast intercept – fly out to Icarus and detonate a bomb near the surface to change its course.

The best way to get the most payload to Icarus was to launch two modified Saturn V rockets into orbit. These would rendezvous with an Apollo space tug launched atop a Titan III rocket. The space tug would connect up the modified S-IVB third stages from the Saturns. They would then be used to push a relatively large spacecraft out to Icarus where it would detonate a large nuclear weapon.

But there were many problems with this proposal. The Saturn S-IVB third stages were not designed to carry fuel in orbit for more than six hours and would require extensive modification. A spacecraft would also have to be designed from scratch and built in under a year. Most importantly, the on-orbit operations required to link up the large craft were extensive and unproven. There would be no way to practice. This plan was rejected.

What the group decided to do was to take six Saturn V rockets then in production, and with only minimal modifications to their payloads use them to carry smaller bombs to Icarus. The first launch would have to take place by April 1968, only a year away, and five more launches would have to follow at two-week increments.

The actual Icarus spacecraft would have consisted of an Apollo Service Module (SM) with a five-foot cylindrical extension known as the Payload Module (PM) at the top. Instead of a Command Module, the top of the stack would be a simple aluminum cone containing a few necessary systems. Although the Apollo Command Module and its associated guidance and control systems would have been useful, its weight was prohibitive and unnecessary. Weight had to be kept to a minimum in order to enable the rocket to carry the biggest possible bomb.

The Payload Module would have carried a 100-megaton bomb shaped as a cylinder roughly three feet in diameter and mounted horizontally along the diameter of the spacecraft. The bomb would weigh 18,150 kilograms. One side of the PM would sport a phased array radar antenna for tracking and rendezvous with the Icarus asteroid.

The plan would have used an essentially unmodified Saturn V rocket. At the time, the first Saturn V test was not scheduled until November 1967 and the planners did not know if it would work. The only real difference with the Icarus Saturn V was the modified adapter shroud at the top of the S-IVB third stage. On a standard Apollo mission to the moon these panels normally would have enclosed the Lunar Module, with the Service Module and Command Module mounted on top. But by modifying them and using them to enclose the entire Service Module and its attached Payload Module, the designers were able to improve the aerodynamics of the rocket, and more importantly, eliminate aerodynamic loads and heating on the radar antenna. In profile, the stack would have

looked much like the Skylab launch vehicle lofted by the Saturn V in 1973, although slightly shorter.

The 100-megaton bomb would have been a challenge. At the time, the largest weapon ever developed for the American nuclear arsenal was a 25-megaton bomb. The Soviets had detonated a 58-megaton bomb earlier in the decade which could have easily been developed into a 100-megaton weapon. However, although the Soviets have not (and still have not) released the weight of this bomb, they were never as good at miniaturizing their bombs as the United States. It is likely that their 100-megaton bomb would have weighed far more than the 18,150-kilogram weight limit for Icarus, so importing a Soviet warhead to save the world was a non-option.

The Icarus plan required a total of nine Saturn V rockets. Three were test flights and the remaining six were interceptors. At the time, NASA planned on having only six Saturn V's available by April 1968, so the production schedule would have to be dramatically increased. In addition, another launch pad would have to be built at Cape Kennedy. Launch Complex 39C would have to be built in order to enable the high flight rate needed for the Saturn launches, all of which had to get off the ground in six weeks.

In addition to the nine Saturn Vs, the Icarus plan called for five Atlas Agena rockets carrying modified versions of the Mariner 2 deep space probe. Known as the Intercept Monitoring Satellite (IMS), these probes would be used to observe the actual detonation of the nuclear bombs when they reached the asteroid. Very little was known about how nuclear weapons would actually behave in space, let alone how the blast would affect an asteroid, and so the IMS was considered vital to the mission.

In late February 1968, the first IMS spacecraft would lift off atop its Atlas Agena booster. It would linger in Earth orbit only a short time before being sent on its way to rendezvous with Icarus. A little over a month later, Interceptor One would thunder aloft on 33 million newtons of thrust. After a coast of one orbit or less, the S-IVB stage would fire, boosting the Icarus spacecraft out of Earth orbit and toward the asteroid. Soon after, the adapter shroud panels would peel back like the petals of a flower and the Icarus spacecraft with its 100-megaton bomb would separate. Its Service Propulsion System engine would fire, adding more velocity to the spacecraft.

After a coast of approximately 60 days, with several course corrections along the way, an optical sensor aboard the spacecraft would acquire Icarus only three hours before rendezvous. The spacecraft then entered the "terminal phase." Four minutes before rendezvous the radar system would begin to supply range information for making final correction maneuvers. At five seconds before impact, a fusing radar would acquire the asteroid and arm the bomb. If all went as planned, detonation would occur within 100 feet of the surface of Icarus along the sunlit edge. The resulting explosion would either fragment or deflect the asteroid off its collision course.

Bad Times – Chapter 17

From Icarus to NEAR

The planners proposed six bombs for the mission. But they faced huge unknowns. The biggest problem was that nobody knew exactly what asteroids in general, and Icarus in particular, were made of. Was Icarus dense or light? Exactly how big was it? How was it shaped?

In fact, thirty-seven years later we are not in a much better situation. Despite studying several asteroids up close with robotic probes and even landing on one with the NEAR spacecraft, planetary scientists are still unsure how they're composed. One theory, known as the "rubble pile," is that many asteroids are not really rocks, but bundles of rocks and dust. Hitting one with a nuclear explosion might accomplish little, as it would absorb the blast and not move very much. Compare trying to push a rock across the ground with one finger with pushing a pile of peanuts across the ground with a finger.

Furthermore, nobody was sure how a nuclear bomb would act in space or how it would affect Icarus – and because nuclear testing in space was effectively banned in the 1960s we still do not know. There was no way to get everything right on the first try and so several bombs would have to be detonated before planners even began to understand what they were doing.

The Icarus project's legacy was primarily to spawn a lousy 1970s movie called *Meteor!* (complete with exclamation mark) which was not only scientifically ridiculous, but committed the grave sin of covering the beautiful Natalie Wood in mud. (I liked the movie, anyway.)

Saving planet Earth

There are new ideas about how to defend against deadly asteroids, but they require long advance warning. One current proposal comes from the awkwardly-named B612 Foundation. Their recommendation is to develop a spacecraft similar to that planned for the Jupiter Icy Moons Orbiter (JIMO) and send it to intercept, and move, a known asteroid. The spacecraft would settle down on the surface and then use its ion propulsion engine to alter the asteroid's trajectory. This would be a demonstration mission, proving that we could defend the planet if needed, and would have an additional science benefit. But any actual saving of planet Earth would require detecting a killer asteroid a decade or more in advance.

Asteroid defense has managed to overcome much of the giggle factor that used to plague it. But it is still not respectable enough in Congress to get even relatively small amounts of funding to search for killer rocks with Earth's name on them. It will probably be decades before it is seriously considered by the American government, unless a near miss by another asteroid scares some people into action.

The guys in the B612 Foundation could start by changing their name. *The Icarus Foundation* has a certain ring to it. Gently pushing a killer rock away is not as sexy as smacking it with giant nukes, but it is far more realistic. And it may be achievable with near-term technology.

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What's the point of the piece about Icarus? In the aftermath of WW III, things happen and we don't know about them because: 1) the White House doesn't know or doesn't tell us; 2) we are helpless to do anything about the looming event; and/or, 3) under those circumstances, why create panic?

We were speculating based on a sole radio broadcast that Biden had appointed himself as President for life, kind of like Fidel. Despite the fact that we never left any witness of the attacks against us, they kept occurring. It seemed, at times, that we had a big arrow pointed at the acreage that was visible from space and indicated where to get food. Sure, people Ruth and I had worked with had been out to the acreage, but they were totally unaware we were preppers due to our OpSec. The gun store in Fresno knew what guns we had purchased but it simply wasn't enough to draw a lot of attention.

As far as the store knew, we only had one M1A, the one we bought for Ruth, the California legal one. Because of the Assault Weapons Ban, Springfield Armory eliminated the bayonet lug and when the Ban expired, they didn't resume installing it. What the government succeeded in doing with the Assault Weapons Ban was to greatly increase the number of straw man transactions. People had a choice, obey a stupid law or find some way around it. The violation of the law was generally state rather than federal after the Ban expired and the crime was importing something unlawful. Fulton Armory, for example, wouldn't ship anything anywhere if importation was illegal.

The problem I had with the M1942 bayonets was that everyone who owned a Garand rifle wanted one. Even the M1 Garand that Springfield Armory built had a bayonet lug and it only had 2 points (semi-auto, bayonet lug) so was California legal. They had stopped manufacturing the rifle, but I didn't catch when that happened, must have been during 2007. I know for a fact that it was in their 2007 catalog and not in their 2008 catalog because I had a copy of both on my hard disk drive.

This winter was far worse than the previous; I lost count after three blizzards. This past summer, highs had barely reached into the mid '80s and we used to get 100° weather. It didn't have much effect on our garden; however if the trend continued... we'd be up that famous creek in a leaky canoe without a paddle. I gave it maybe three years before temperatures fell to the point it would reduce our crops.

"Why don't you just leave that rope strung up instead of taking it down between snow storms?"

"I keep telling myself that it will be the last one we have. I've lost count but they seem to be averaging one a month."

"Sam, we've had five and the average is closer to 25 days between. I think I'd expect them to continue into April."

"Have you had a chance to think over whether or not we want to invite Will and his family to live here?"

"You said he served in the Army, right?"

"That's what he told me."

"I don't know if it applies equally to soldiers, but the Corps claims, *once a Marine, always a Marine.*"

"He seemed to know his way around the A3. When did they come out?"

"They brought the A3 and A4 out in '94. The A2 dates back to '83. Beginning with the A2, they switched from M193 to M855. The latest variant is M995. It has a companion in 7.62, the M993 and we got some of both from Barstow. You should really load a few magazines with it and mark them as AP ammo. It has the same black tip as the M855, so you'll need to differentiate between the two rounds. You might put one piece of tape for M855 and two for M995."

"I'll do that; now what about Will?"

"It would improve our security and he does have prior training. You said he was training his wife and daughters the safe handling and use of the A3, so I don't see why not. If we get another visitor, though, they will have to sleep in a tent."

"I really don't intend to invite anyone else, Gene. In fact, I hadn't planning on inviting Will until I got the good deal on the Mini-14."

"I don't know why you wanted one. It shoots the same cartridges as the A3s and we have a fair bunch of A3s sitting around unused."

"I suppose the same reason I always wanted the M1A. It has a piston driven action that doesn't get dirty and fail to fire. I set it up the way I wanted and put it in my BoB in my toolbox. I didn't want to take a chance on the magazine springs, so I only loaded 27-rounds. And, like I told you, I used to own one just like it. However, I paid less than \$250 for the original rifle and then fixed it up the way I wanted. Sometimes, you really need a rifle and should I have a problem with my M1A, I have that for backup."

"I hadn't thought about that, it's a good idea. Go ahead and invite Will and his family, having four extra guns may make the difference if some idiot attacks us,"

“Like the previous idiots?”

“You were very lucky on that second attack and you know it. Without the sniper in the bedroom window, I think you may have come out on the losing end. Thinking about the subsequent shootouts, is Sarah fully healed?”

“Close, but the scars are still pink. I seriously doubt she’ll ever put on a swimsuit again.”

“She shouldn’t feel that way; those scars are more like badges of honor. She deserves a medal, but we don’t have any. Who took out the gunner on the second Hummer?”

“Bill fired an entire 20-round magazine into him.”

“It was probably no more than he deserved. No shots had been fired at any of the CNG personnel, all she did was punch out a couple of windows. We’ve managed to accumulate quite the arsenal between what we picked up at Barstow and what others have seen fit to donate. Those weapons give us a tactical advantage; they’re a real force multiplier, unless they bring in Abrams or Bradley’s. Plus, the use of small numbers of specialists to create larger effective forces is another form of multiplication. The basic A Team of Special Forces is a 12-man unit that can train and lead a company-sized unit of local guerrillas. While it is not clear when the term *force multiplier* first appeared in the military literature, the use of small teams to raise much larger guerrilla units was among the first uses of the term. No one has been back looking for me since Colonel Allen so maybe I’ve finally dropped off their radar.”

“Let’s hope so, if they come back they may bring an Infantry Division.”

“Since Biden is in charge now, I’m not worried about them coming back. What I am worried about is the resumption of Monarchy.”

“He wouldn’t dare.”

“How is anyone going to stop him? I assume he’s still holed up in Mt. Weather. King George ruled the Americas from across the ocean so anything is possible.”

“Maybe, but I don’t like it.”

◦

“If you still want in, everyone agrees that we should let you move out to the acreage. I know you thought it was a farm, but I own five acres and I am using the 5 acres across the road sort of like a small feed lot with some grazing. The garden is around 4½ acres, just shy of 200,000ft². So far we’re managing to stay ahead of the curve and grow enough food to sell some at the Farmer’s Market. If you know who to see, you can al-

ways get rice up in the Sacramento Valley. About 85% of what they grow is Calrose, but their specialty rice's include Jasmine."

"I don't want to seem rude, but do you have a lot of food?"

"So much so that we have to sell the extra at the Farmer's Market for lack of space, Will."

"But you had some of everything except coffee."

"We have a lot of coffee, but that's almost impossible to replace, unless you happen to like Starbucks. I prefer Folgers. Loaded up on that from Costco before the war and still have some left. Of course, we did a little strategic reallocation and picked up more. If you went shopping at Costco after the war and noticed the empty shelves, you should know that what others didn't get, we got."

"What about things like flour?"

"We had a lot of those 25 pound bags of bread flour from Wally World. Of course we got a Country Living Grain Mill and spare parts and are now grinding our own grain. It might be nicer to have a larger mill, but it works and just takes longer."

"What do we need to bring?"

"The singlewide is furnished with new furniture so just bring your clothing and anything that's important to you and your family."

"You strategically reallocated food, we did the same only went for clothes. With two growing teenage girls, you can't imagine the whining that went on until I relented."

"Did you get them training on the firearms?"

"Not quite to the point where they can assemble them blindfolded, but close. They're as good of shots as the rifles will allow them to be. We don't have much ammo left, just one load out for all of our magazines."

"Not to worry, mate, we have enough ammo to fight a couple of wars. I always wanted to say something in Australian."

"What about the kangaroo song?"

"Do you mean:

SPOKEN: (There's an old Australian stockman lying, dying. He gets himself up onto one elbow and 'e turns to his mates, who are all gathered around and 'e says)

Watch me wallabies feed, mate ♪
Watch me wallabies feed,
They're a dangerous breed, mate
So watch me wallabies feed
Altogether now!

Tie me kangaroo down, sport ♪
Tie me kangaroo down
Tie me kangaroo down, sport
Tie me kangaroo down

Keep me cockatoo cool, Curl, ♪
Keep me cockatoo cool
Ah, don't go acting the fool, Curl
Just keep me cockatoo cool
Altogether now!

Tie me kangaroo down, sport ♪
Tie me kangaroo down
Tie me kangaroo down, sport
Tie me kangaroo down

'n' take me koala back, Jack ♪
Take me koala back
He lives somewhere out on the track, Mac
So take me koala back
Altogether now!

Tie me kangaroo down, sport ♪
Tie me kangaroo down
Tie me kangaroo down, sport
Tie me kangaroo down

Let me abos go loose, Lew ♪
Let me abos go loose
They're of no further use, Lew
So let me abos go loose
Altogether now!

Tie me kangaroo down, sport ♪
Tie me kangaroo down
Tie me kangaroo down, sport
Tie me kangaroo down

And mind me platypus duck, Bill ♪
Mind me platypus duck

*Ah, don't let 'im go running amok, Bill
Just mind me platypus duck
Altogether now!*

*Tie me kangaroo down, sport ♪
Tie me kangaroo down
Tie me kangaroo down, sport
Tie me kangaroo down*

*Play your didgeridoo, Blue ♪
Play your didgeridoo
Ah, like, keep playin' 'til I shoot thru, Blue
Play your didgeridoo
Altogether now!*

*Tie me kangaroo down, sport ♪
Tie me kangaroo down
Tie me kangaroo down, sport
Tie me kangaroo down*

*Tan me hide when I'm dead, Fred ♪
Tan me hide when I'm dead
So we tanned his hide when he died, Clyde
And that's it hangin' on the shed!!
Altogether now!*

*Tie me kangaroo down, sport ♪
Tie me kangaroo down
Tie me kangaroo down, sport
Tie me kangaroo down”*

“I don't remember any verse about abos.”

“Oh, that refers to aboriginals and was removed from the song because it wasn't politically correct.”

“One problem Sam, I'm afraid I don't have enough fuel to go very far.”

“There are 5 5-gallon cans in the back of my truck. I have 5 cans of diesel, 5 cans of gasoline and 5 cans of water. How long will it take you to get around?”

“Ten minutes?”

“Go get your stuff and I'll fill your tank. Gas or diesel?”

“Gas.”

They had enough stuff to fill the back of his truck, but I suspected they had taken their time and carefully selected what they wanted to take. Penny had more jars than Will said she had, but he had suggested she knew where to get more. There were enough to fill the back of my pickup. If I had to hazard a guess, I'd guess between 500 and 600. She had two cases of lids, not one.

When we arrived at the acreage, I showed Will which trailer was theirs and they began unloading. I told Ruth there were around 600 jars in the back of my truck and wanted to know where to put them. She said she'd get the boys to move them to the basement. She asked if there were lids and I replied, "Two cases."

After Will and Penny were settled in, we invited them to the house and made introductions. Gene learned that Will had been a Corporal and on the promotion list for Sergeant when he got out. His MOS was Infantry (11B) and he had served in a weapons Platoon for about a year, but hadn't cross trained to a different MOS. He said the Mechanized MOS had been changed to 11B so it didn't make any difference. He served right after Desert Storm for four years on active duty. Both Gene and I were surprised; we'd thought he was older only because of having a seventeen old daughter. He explained that he and Penny were engaged and got married while he was in the Army.

One thing we weren't short of was 30-round magazines for the M16s. After they were settled in, I'd given Will more magazines and two cases of M855 to fill them. He asked if we were really expecting trouble and I recounted our various confrontations to date. I mentioned how lucky we'd been because, so far, only Sarah had been wounded, and that was by wood splinters and one grenade fragment. I told him that I doubted our luck would hold and it wasn't a matter of if, just when and who. When I mentioned taking out the two Hummers of CNG troops, he related the stink that had been raised in Fresno.

"As a result of that action, the Governor transferred in a Company of the California Military Reserve to Fresno. Word was that the group had several places to check out and hadn't left an itinerary. They tried to conduct house-to-house searches, but the local residents objected and had them totally outnumbered. I guess they must have chalked it up to another unexplained occurrence."

"Were there many of those unexplained occurrences?"

"About one per week; Fresno may have had a population of around one million, but the ultimate survivors were the people who had guns and food put up. If you lose your refrigeration, there are other ways to preserve your meat. If nothing else, you can put it up in quart jars. You can make jerky and salt some of the cuts down. Provided, of course, you can get salt. I had two bags of water softener salt and used it. We canned most of the meat, but it didn't last long. That's why I was so desperate last fall."

“We’ll get your family to the range and check out your skills. I have a bad feeling about this summer; something big is going to happen. Have you noticed the falling temperatures?”

“I saw something on TV a few years back about another little ice age. Is that what you mean?”

“Yes; and that one lasted from around 1250 to 1850. There were several ways of determining when it started and they ranged from 1250 to around 1650, the first climatic minimum. The ice ages supposedly occur about once every 1,500 years; however, you have to ask yourself what effect a nuclear winter would have on a the long term climate.”

“Well, maybe someone will write another Frankenstein, she wrote that during *The Year Without a Summer*.”

“I think we may have to consider building a large greenhouse if the weather continues to cool.”

“You don’t have one?”

“Thought about it, but we never built one. We started the plants in our homes and transplanted them when the soil was warm enough.”

“If you can come up with a plan to build one, I think I know where we can get Lexan. I’m not sure how much is available, but I think it’s a lot.”

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“Mr. President, the doctors are ready to release Mr. Obama from care.”

“Really? Tell the doctor that I’d like to talk to him, or her. We have to be certain he is ready to pick up the reins.”

“I’ve spoken with him and he seems to be back to normal. He’s been asking questions about how the cleanup is going, whether we’ve been able to marshal our resources and provide food and other things that make me think he is ready.”

“Let me be the judge of that, after I talk to the doctor. He’s strong, there’s no doubt about that, but is he strong enough to resume his duties? Plus, I have far more political experience in this job than he has so after I talk to the doctor, I guess I’d better visit with him.”

“Yes Mr. President. There’s one more thing I need to bring to your attention. The Governor of California activated their state Military Reserve Force. Several members of the

California National Guard on patrol were killed and he moved a Company of the CSMR into Fresno.”

“So what, that’s why he has a state Defense Force?”

“True, but the CNG troops had been federalized so it’s an attack on the Army. Do you think we have the beginning of another Revolution?”

“I can tell you one thing General, if we don’t get a handle on the cleanup and supplying food, we probably will have a Revolution. Most people won’t resist authority until circumstances force them to. Even then, the resistance is generally a vocal minority. However, that could change, thanks to George Bush who allowed the Assault Weapons Ban to expire.”

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We weren’t thinking about revolting, we just wanted to be secure and grow what food we could. When the soil warmed up, we planted and after the first harvest took what we couldn’t can in time to the Farmer’s Market. Prices were up at every stand, so Gene and I agreed to increase our prices slightly but try to stay below the others. As one might expect, most of the customers were armed. The most popular rifle seemed to be the SKS, illegal in California. One vendor was selling 7.62x39mm ammo and was getting around 30¢ per round. By noon, he had sold out and was packing up.

“Man, the prices just keep going up. Last year when I bought from you, everything was cheaper.”

“We’re still cheaper than the others. One of the problems is the weather; it’s cooling off and affecting the amount we can produce.”

“Nice looking M14.”

“It’s a M1A, but thank you. I much prefer the 7.62 over the 5.56. Where did you come up with an SKS?”

“One of the others made a trip to Reno and got a truckload of rifles and ammo. We’re going to need them soon, you know.”

Bad Times – Chapter 18

“Actually, we only get into Fresno about 4 times a year to sell our extra meat and produce. What do you mean by needing them soon?”

“The CNG and CSMR are pushing too hard and there is some talk about taking them on. We don’t like the idea of paying tribute for them to offer protection.”

“Shouldn’t the state be paying them?”

“Are you sure you’re from California? The state has been bankrupt since around 2008. What are they going to pay them with and who would accept those worthless Federal Reserve Notes?”

“Doesn’t the state pay in warrants?”

“What’s a warrant?”

“Payroll warrants look like checks and clear through the banking system like checks, but are not drawn against cleared funds in a deposit account. Instead they are drawn against available funds that are not in the bank so the issuer can collect interest on the float. In the US, warrants are issued by government entities such as the military and state and county governments. Warrants are issued for payroll to individuals and for accounts payable to vendors. Technically a warrant is not payable on demand and may not be negotiable. Deposited warrants are routed to a collecting bank which processes them as collection items like maturing treasury bills and presents the warrants to the government entity’s Treasury Department for payment each business day.”

“They don’t have any available funds. So if they issued warrants, nobody would accept them as cash. As a result, the CNG, which has been federalized, and the CSMR are demanding a small portion of the food people grow or purchase to pay them for their services.”

“We crossed swords with the CNG a while back.”

“What happened?”

“Let’s just say that we prevailed, although it was not without cost.”

“How many killed?”

“None on our side, but my daughter was wounded. She’s ok now, but it left her badly scarred.”

“Physically or emotionally?”

“Probably both, but mostly physically.”

“What happened?”

“I’d rather not discuss that if you don’t mind; the fewer that know, the better for us.”

“The only incident I know of involving the CNG was... that was you?”

“What’s that saying? I can neither nor confirm nor deny that. I don’t know what you’re talking about. I think the exact quote was, *I have no recollection, Senator.*”

“Tom Clancy; *Clear and Present Danger?*”

“You’ve got it.”

“If a Revolution erupts, what will be your position?”

“We haven’t discussed the possibility so I can’t really answer a question like that.”

“The Hummers they recovered were missing the Ma Deuce and the Mk19.”

“Really, you don’t say? Fifty-caliber anything is illegal in California.”

“They claimed that the front windows of the Hummer had been punched through by Raufoss. Each round of that stuff is a destructive device. They also said that those soldiers had been killed by .30 caliber ammo.”

“That will do it every time. That’s why I have a M1A; the poodle shooter just doesn’t cut it.”

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“Did you hear that guy?”

“If they revolt, they’re going to run into problems, the Insurrection Act of 1807 as amended by the John Warner Bill changed the powers of the President. Congress overturned the changes but Bush used a pocket veto. I lost track after that, but I think it’s still the law of the land.”

“Gene, we already have a National Emergency, why would an insurrection make any difference?”

“Because TPTB stand to lose their power. They have done little about the war except launching a cleanup. We’ve discussed this; you and I will be in our graves before it’s completed. Our children may be in their graves before things are rebuilt.”

“If they rebuild.”

“There’s that, too. They haven’t collected taxes for three years, so where is the money coming from to pay for the cleanup? It’s just possible that a fair share of the military is deserting because they aren’t being paid. If I were a starving soldier, I’d take my rifle and some ammo when I left. Then I’d do my best to get home, wherever home is. Pretty much what I did, except I didn’t take any M16s.”

“You didn’t need to, we have plenty.”

“That’s true, but I didn’t know it at the time. Still we weren’t without resources.”

“I’ve never tried the HK416, are they much better than a M16?”

“Other than the fact that you get a lot fewer stoppages, there isn’t much difference. You remember those tests they did? The rifle the Army rejected, the XM8, was the best one of the bunch.”

“You have to be Buck Rogers to appreciate the looks of that rifle. It was pure space age and mostly plastic.”

“One of the things I liked about it was that it was based on H&K’s G36. They had a problem with the plastic and upgraded it. Just about the time they were ready to get serious, Congress cut the money and wouldn’t let them buy 7,000 rifles for a test run.”

“If I were on the Army unit responsible for acquiring weapons, I’d buy M14s and either leave out the full-auto part or add the system the Italians used on the BM59. That was basically a Garand, the same as the M14, but you could control it in full-auto fire.”

“I fired one and you could sort of control it in full auto. That’s why Beretta added the pistol grip, to give better control. However, to go back to the M14 would be a step backward and we all know the military never goes backwards.”

“Right, even if it’s the best decision.”

“Soldiers these days can’t handle a rifle that weighs 10 pounds and isn’t made of plastic. The Corps still uses a fair number of M14s and so does the Navy and Coast Guard. Say, do you talk about anything other than guns?”

“I think about guns a lot but I also think about sex a lot. They’re not mutually exclusive, some weapons are positively sexy.”

“M1A?”

“I’d choose the M1A, the Tac-50 and the Mini-14, although the M1911 and the Browning are the sexiest handguns.”

“Why not the M1 Garand?”

“Eight round en bloc clip. The other rifle they were testing that ended up in service was the Johnson rifle but it was only used by the Devil’s Brigade, that American-Canadian Special Forces Unit. I didn’t much care for the M1 Carbine either, even though it was more powerful than the .45. One advantage it had was that it was California legal. I’d take my tricked out Mini-14 any day compared to the M1 Carbine.”

“I thought that you didn’t like the 5.56.”

“Close, I don’t like the M16 or anything derived from it, like the M4. The 5.56 cartridge is a great mid-range cartridge. It has about twice the speed and $\frac{1}{3}$ more muzzle energy than the .30 Carbine. Still, a carbine would be better than having a club or a spear.”

“Now you see what I mean, I say one word about firearms and I get a lecture. There’s more to life than rifles and gardening.”

“Right, handguns, shotguns, grenades and LAW rockets.”

“You’re hopeless.”

“Thank you.”

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I thought about what that guy was proposing, it would be a long shot under the best of circumstances. Imagine people with hunting rifles and shotguns, going up against one of the best trained military forces in the world. But if Gene was right about the desertions, an insurrection just might stand a chance. The main thing would be to cut their access by taking down bridges, blocking overpasses and so forth. The down side to that would be that anything we did to them would have the same effect on us.

Hell, they didn’t even have to get close, they had that new N-LOS cannon and it could shoot the Excalibur shells. The latest upgrades to the Abrams tanks had included replacing the L44 gun with the L55 gun, increasing the range significantly. They began that project back in 1999, but I only found out by happenstance. I was trying to get some information on the Leopard II and searched Global Security for information on the L55. What I found was DoD requests and justification for funding. As I read through the years, I learned just how many M1A2SEPs had L55 main guns, a lot. It also appeared that the British were looking to replace their L30 rifled cannon with the L55 and so was Canada.

One fact that led to us winning the Revolution against King George was the Kentucky rifles we had as opposed to Brown Bess muskets the British soldier had. The British had a range of 100 yards but generally fired en masse from around 50 yards. The colonials

had those long barreled rifles with a range of up to 300 yards. Sometimes the British are slow to come up with the correct solution, but they invariably do. Their current tank was as safe as the Abrams (both use the Chobham II developed by the US) and with the L55 gun it would probably be close to an Abrams. Our real claim to fame was using the German gun, the Chobham II armor and our own fire control system. Plus we finally had adopted a new engine, the LV-50-2 based on the LV-100-5 developed for the Crusader. Also, the TUSK package on the Abrams was standard equipment on the M1A3.

All of which made me think that if we ended going up against our own Army it would be a tough battle. It was a lot to think about, was Gene right about desertions, was that fella in town right about it erupting soon, would it be a limited insurrection against the California forces or would it move nation-wide? We could hold our own, up to a limit, but there was no way we could go up against Main Battle Tanks or Armored Fighting Vehicles like the Bradley. In Iraq during the Gulf War, the Bradley took out more Iraqi armor than the Abrams.

This brought me back to how we could limit the effectiveness of the armor. We could only do that if we could keep them away from us. Blowing a bridge wouldn't do because the vehicles were made to travel on unimproved terrain. In fact they lasted longer on unimproved terrain than they did on highways because the highways were hard on the tracks. There was a problem with the M1A3 that the military had been remiss on correcting, those fancy sighting systems were solid state and generated a lot of heat. They overcame the heat problem too, later. However, I couldn't see how we could capitalize on this, if anything, the colder weather ameliorated the problem.

I was obviously thinking about the possibility of an insurrection or revolution, but it wasn't something to run off half-cocked and get killed in the process. For a plan that might work, I'd have to defer to the General, they study that stuff in the Army War College. I had attended phase I BNCOC, a very long time back. Now days, you needed to pass phase II to be promoted to Staff Sergeant.

Insurgency and its tactics are as old as warfare itself. Joint doctrine defines an insurgency as an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. These definitions are a good starting point, but they do not properly highlight a key paradox: though insurgency and COIN (counterinsurgency) are two sides of a phenomenon that has been called revolutionary war or internal war, they are distinctly different types of operations. In addition, insurgency and COIN are included within a broad category of conflict known as irregular warfare.

The Department of Defense's (DOD) definition focuses on the type of violence employed (unlawful) towards specified ends (political, religious or ideological). This characterization fails to address the argument from moral relativity that *one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter*. In essence, this objection to a suitable definition submits that while violence may be "unlawful" in accordance with a victim's statutes, the cause

served by those committing the acts may represent a positive good in the eyes of neutral observers.

There is no single accepted definition of *civil war*, but it is a manifestation of insurgency, widely considered to meet two definitions:

- The major warring groups must be from the same country and fighting for control of the political center, control over a separatist state or to force a major change in policy. There may be volunteers from other countries under the command of one or more of the warring groups.
- The second says that at least 1,000 people must have been killed in total, with at least 100 from each side.

This insurrection business was so complicated that it defied definition. American had been through one Civil War aka The War of Northern Aggression. In that case the government overpowered the insurgents, in part because the government had the industry. However, many pundits point out that slavery wasn't economically viable and if the North hadn't pushed the issue, it would have resolved itself. I concluded that it depended mostly on who won, just like the first and second world wars.

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"I'd like your opinion on a revolution/insurrection; can it be done?"

"Yes but, there are many qualifiers on my answer. Are you still thinking about that guy from the Farmer's Market?"

"I've been thinking on it. The Army and Marines have Abrams they could use against any insurgency. Plus, they have Bradley Fighting Vehicles. I can't even come up with an absolute definition of an insurgency. The only thing I am sure of is that the Confederates lost the Civil War. Therefore, we couldn't go public, like say the Irish Republican Army. I also concluded that there's no way to keep the armored vehicles away because if we block the roads, they'll simply go around."

"The key to any insurgency is total secrecy. Did you ever see the movie about the French Foreign Legion titled *The Battle of Algiers*?"

"Yes I did the Foreign Legion won, but in the end the FLN ended up in charge."

"The FLN used the cell system where each member only knew three other members, the one above him and the two below him. The film ends with a coda, depicting demonstrations and rioting by native Algerians for independence, in which it is suggested that though the French have won the Battle of Algiers, they have lost the war. Mao's phase identified four elements that *typically encompass an insurgency*:

- Cell-networks that maintain secrecy

- Terrorism used to foster insecurity among the population and drive them to the movement for protection
- Multifaceted attempts to cultivate support in the general population, often by undermining the new regime
- Attacks against the government

“I won’t have any part of terrorism. Most of the time, terrorism turns around and bites you on the butt. Ask bin Laden.”

“I have to agree with that, I want no part of terrorism either. I understand how the cell-network works, but everyone on the acreage knows each other, a definite problem, especially if the government uses water boarding. The other problem I see is the Chief of State being locked up in Cheyenne Mountain or Mt. Weather, hence inaccessible.”

“As far as attacking the government, we pretty well set. I believe that although a silencer doesn’t completely silence a weapon, we’d be far better off using silenced weapons. You can achieve total silence with something like a Hush Puppy, but after a few rounds, the rubber is worn out.”

“Then you’re aboard?”

“That depends upon what decisions we make.”

“I’d go with silencers, but where would we get them? Another trip to Reno is probably out of the question.”

“We have the Surefire suppressors that could be a pattern if we could find a local machinist to make them. I have the .223 suppressors too, but it’s the Surefire suppressor for the HK416. The model number is M4FA556-BK and it’s for 5.56 mm rifles and carbines. End-mount design permits use on firearms with short barrel length forward of front sight/gas port. Compact size provides short overall weapon length. Adapters available for Colt Commando, M4, M16, HK416, Diemaco SFW, SA-80, and other firearms threaded to accept a Surefire suppressor adapter.”

“The problem with the Surefire is that they’re so expensive.”

“We could get the Gem Tech, it’s a very good suppressor and has a quick attach mount that’s probably better than the Surefire. Plus, it costs about half as much and I seriously doubt we’ll ever wear out the baffles. I hate to say it, but it’s six of one and a half-dozen of the other.”

“Surefire uses a propriety metal for their baffles. Maybe the Gem Tech would be a better choice. I’m not opposed to going to Reno, if we could get enough suppressors. It would mean that we’d have them just as fast as we could go get them. It would probably take longer than that to get a machinist to agree to make some.”

"I'm willing to pool my gold and silver with yours if that's your choice. We might stop and see the Command Sergeant Major and twist his arm harder."

"That guy we bought the Tac-50 from was a class-3 dealer. I wonder if he would have the suppressors we need? He didn't seem to be bothered by not being able to run a NICS check."

"I believe that anyone with class-3 weapons is either selling them or using themselves. Gold is probably the only way to get them to part with them. Say, we could take 15 A3s and see if we could trade them for suppressors."

"Why not, we'd still have too many. What we have left could go to some of the other insurgents, but I'll have to wait until the next Farmer's Market and see if that guy shows up again."

"Lord knows we can supply them with ammo. We have extra magazines, too. You should probably hold back a few of the A3s and let the dealer have, what, a dozen?"

"I have 26 out of the original 30 left. I'll keep a six and let him have twenty."

"You dislike them that much?"

"About the only thing they're better than is a club, if they're clean."

"Do you want to leave tomorrow?"

"Let's leave about 5am and see what we can do on suppressors. Then we'll go see your friend the Sgt. Major. Maybe he'll let us have a lot of the Raufoss if we tell him what it is for. By the way, if he has the Raufoss, that must mean he has a .50 caliber rifle. What kind does he have?"

"He has an AS-50, from Britain. I think he bought that in 2005. Before that, he had the M82A1."

"What did he do with his?"

"I think he still has it. It's the M107."

"Do you think he'd sell it?"

"I doubt it, he calls it his baby. Last time I talked to him after he got the Accuracy International, he was all bubbly because the AI was even more accurate than the Barrett. The rifle came with the Schmidt & Bender PM II variable power scope but he didn't tell me what the power range was."

"You told me that he was a sniper."

“As in past tense, he was a sniper. But that was before he started to pile on the rank. You don’t see any Command Sergeant Majors in the field with a sniper rifle.”

“I’ll talk to Will and see if he’d like to ride along.”

“I’ll get M14 and magazines for him; I don’t want to go with someone only armed with an A3.”

“Got a M1911 you can spare?”

“I’ll get one, will five magazines be enough, or do you want more?”

“Enough for the .45 but give him at least a nine for the rifle. Better yet, I’ll give him a Tac Force Chest Harness to wear and he can put grenades in the two side pockets.

“I’ll take one of those if you have spares.”

“All I have is tan.”

“So, that will be fine; desert color?”

“That was my thought at the time.”

“We can load extra magazines and carry them in a cardboard box. I think that more is always better. But, the magazines are heavy which is why they went to the M16.”

“Don’t remind me.”

“Gene and I are going to Reno tomorrow; would you like to go along?”

“Is it important Sam?”

“We think so. We’re going up there to purchase or otherwise acquire several suppressors for both 7.62 and 5.56 caliber rifles and maybe some for the Browning Hi-Powers and M1911s.”

“What for?”

“I guess I’d better explain. When Gene and I were at the Farmer’s Market the other day, I ran into a fella who was talking about either a Revolution or an Insurrection. They’re about the same thing, you know. I spent a day or two thinking about what he proposed and then discussed it with Gene. We think we’re going to join up if we can find the guy again. One of the things we discussed was our approach if we attacked government people and we agreed that a silencer would improve our chances because they mask

the sound and make it hard for someone to locate you. If you chose to go, we'll equip you with an M14 and an M1911."

"We don't have much money."

"Don't worry about it, Gene and I do. The rifle you'll take already has a suppressor. We'll leave at 0500."

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"This vest contains 8 20-round magazines and there are more in the cardboard box. The side pockets each contain 3 grenades, the M61. You have five magazines for the pistol and they're loaded with 200gr +P Gold Dot. The suppressor is removable and Gene will show you as we drive. That nylon case on the pistol belt holds the suppressor if you remove it from the rifle. There are LAW rockets in the toolbox in the bed of the pickup along with the Mini-14 and all the magazines. Any questions?"

"I guess not."

"Let's roll."

"How long will it take?"

"About 5½ hours, we're taking the shortest route, not the fastest route. The fastest route would take us through Sacramento and we won't chance it. I hope you ate breakfast, the only time we plan to stop is for a potty break."

"Sorry guys, I can't get another TAC-50."

"That's not what we're looking for. You're a class-3 dealer, right?"

"Yes I am. I don't have any machineguns if that's what you're looking for."

"We're looking for suppressors and adapters. We have 20 slightly used M16A3s to offer in trade."

"What kind of suppressors?"

"9mm, .45, extended threaded barrels, and some for rifles; here, I made a list."

"Do you have magazines for the rifles?"

"We brought seven per rifle, standard military load out."

"And what did you have in mind for a trade?"

Bad Times – Chapter 19

“We’ll trade even up, one rifle and magazines per suppressor and mount.”

“I don’t have everything you want in stock. However, I think I can get it if you give me a little time. We can’t keep military rifles in stock; they go out almost as fast as we get them in.”

“These are standard calibers, any preference on brand?”

“Surefire or Gem Tech. Or, Advanced Armament will be fine.”

“Give me about four hours. Come back around 2:30. No promises, but I’ll see what I can do.”

“Sergeant Major, how are you today?”

“You out running around again General? You’d better watch your six, Biden has the office now.”

“So we’ve heard. We came up here to trade some A3s for suppressors and I wanted to see how much more Raufoss we could talk you out of. The fella with us is Will.”

“Howdy Will. General, did you use up all of the ammo I sold you?”

“Not hardly. Do you feel like a little adventure?”

“What did you have in mind?”

“Something on the order of an insurrection; the federalized CNG, the CSMR aren’t getting paid and they working the protection racket on the citizens of Fresno. Someone made a suggestion and Sam here mulled it over and then came to me. We might be able to pull it off, if we handle it right. That’s why we came up here for suppressors; they would make it harder to locate our snipers. I considered the fact that you’re one of the best snipers I ever knew. Plus, you have two .50 caliber rifles and we have one.”

“That’s not all I have General. I have two national match grade M14s, two M1911s and two Browning Hi-Powers. Plus I have enough ammo to fight WW IV. You hardly dented my supply of Mk211; I still have 6,000-rounds.”

“Are your weapons suppressed?”

“The pistols and two M14s are, but only the AS-50 has a silencer, Barrett never approved a silencer for their M82. We want me to come back to California with you?”

“Are you willing?”

"If I can get more antacid, that place gives me heartburn. What's my role in the scheme of things?"

"You're a Master Sniper and instructed at Ft. Benning until you picked up those extra stripes. How about you start out training our snipers and then take a field position?"

"You already have some snipers, don't you? It seems to me that Sam's daughter Sarah is already a sniper."

"She is Sergeant Major, but she's not a trained sniper; rather, she's just a very good shot."

"Well, you have to start somewhere. She shoots the M1A and I presume the Tac-50?"

"She shoots both."

"Give me an hour or so to get my things around and I'll pack my pickup and follow you back to Fresno."

"Is it gas or diesel?"

"Diesel."

"Do you have enough fuel? It's about 300 miles give or take."

"Both the tank and the reserve tank are full and stabilized. I should be able to go at least 500 miles, and if I drive slowly around 600."

The dealer had what I put on the list but I hadn't stopped to think that there were only 18 items on the list and we had 20 rifles. He said he wanted all 20 rifles and wondered if there was something he had in stock that he could give us in exchange for the other two rifles. We settled on scopes and mounts for 4 M1As and two more Tac-50 magazines and a box of T-57 magazines.

It was after dark when we pulled in so we took the box of things from Reno and put them in the basement. Ruth and Shirley had dinner waiting and we four men chowed down because we hadn't eaten since breakfast. The Sergeant Major, whose name turned out to be Allen Smith (just call me Al), would get one of our empty bedrooms. I'd put his age around 55. The back of his pickup was filled with cases of ammo and other things I didn't recognize. He took his weapons to his bedroom and said he'd unload the pickup tomorrow.

I was asleep the moment my head hit the pillow, it had been a very long day other than the fuel we burned we hadn't expended any consumables. When I rolled out around 6am Al was in the kitchen sitting at the table drinking coffee.

“Morning.”

“Sam. Where do you want me to store my ammo?”

“We store ammo in the basement and explosives in the pole barn. Let me finish my coffee and I’ll help you unload.”

“I don’t have much for the pole barn, but I have plenty for the basement. There are 50 ammo cans Mk211, 40 cases of Barrett, 5,000-rounds of Black Hills 168gr BTHP and 5,000-rounds of 175gr Black Hills BTHP. I’m not heavy on pistol ammo, maybe 1,500-rounds of each caliber and only 3 cases of 12-pellet 00 buckshot. One thing you might be interested in is those frangible door breaching rounds and the 12 gauge flares. They’re sort of a poor man’s incendiary. Almost forgot, one case of slugs.”

“That’s more .50 caliber than we have but we have oodles of 7.62 and 5.56.”

”Which loads?”

“M118LR, M80 ball and M993 in 7.62; M855 and M995 in 5.56; Mk 211 MP and Hornady A-MAX 750gr match; plus Gold Dot +P and FMJ Lawman in 9mm and .45acp. We have buckshot and slugs for the shotguns.”

“What else?”

“M61s, M72s, M136 AT 4 plus the machine guns, Mk19s, M2HBs, M240s, Mk46s and Mk48s. If we get attacked the women either crew the machineguns or snipe. Our daughters and daughters-in-law are our snipers and they’ll be the first group you train. I don’t believe they’ll need as much field craft as what you taught in sniper school”

“Give me a day to get settled and everything put away. How big is your farm?”

“It’s not really a farm Al; it’s 5 acres. We use the 5 acre parcel across the road for our livestock. About 4½ acres is planted in garden, and we produce food for ourselves and sell some at the Farmer’s Market. That’s where I met that fella talking about an insurrection.”

“Do you trust him?”

“I don’t even know him. He didn’t give his name and I didn’t ask.”

“Is it ok if I go to town with you for the next Farmer’s Market?”

“Sure, do you want to talk with that guy?”

“I’d like to find out what they’re planning and if I think it will work. If they plan on starting in Fresno, they’re doomed from the start. They should find a smaller city and take out the troops stationed there. They can move on to a larger city and make Fresno the third or fourth city they hit. It will create an illusion of building success, increase confidence and direct people away from the thought that they’re based in Fresno.”

“Where would we come in?”

“Kind of like Daniel Morgan’s Riflemen from the First Revolutionary War. I think the General will agree with me when I suggest this whole group be formed into snipers to support the efforts of the others. Of course that depends on what I hear in town and what the General says.”

“Do you and the General go back a ways?”

“He was a Second Lieutenant fresh out of West Point and I was a Corporal, the lowest ranking NCO the Army has. That was back around ’75 or ’76, just after Nam. He was assigned to my Platoon. I could shoot pretty well and he backed my play to get sniper training. I finished up and got reassigned to the same Platoon, covering his back. He made rank a little faster than I did, but he kept putting in requests for me to be in his Command. Eventually, I ended up back at Sniper School at Benning, until I got promoted to Sergeant Major. Then I ended up at the Pentagon with the General and made Command Sergeant Major before I retired.”

“Made it a habit of covering each other’s back?”

“Hadn’t thought about it, but that sounds about right. I helped him get the new-in-the-box M14s he has. I knew somebody who knew somebody, etc. Got him the M118LR and all those magazines he has, too. He hated the M9 and exercised his preference and carried a M1911. His wife preferred the 9mm and he bought some Browning Hi-Powers. Don’t know how he got the HK416s, I was retired by then, but some contractors make a habit of providing rifles to TPTB so they shoot them, like them and buy them. That’s how we ended up with M16; Bombs Away LeMay went to a barbeque or something and shot one.”

“I hate them, they’re a real POS; couple of hundred rounds and they’re so dirty you have to clean them.”

“The HK416 doesn’t have that problem.”

“Neither does my Mini-14. The only problem with it is the barrel getting hot.”

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Al did his best to turn all of us into sniper quality shooters, over the course of the next three weeks. He showed us how to make a Ghillie suit, but didn’t dwell on field craft. It

was more important for us to be able to estimate the range and the windage than hide. He had about a dozen laser range finders and his Barrett had the BORS. Together with what he had and Gene provided, we were properly equipped to engage in sniping. And then, it was time to go to the Farmer's Market again.

"Upgraded your M1A?"

"Oh. Hi. Yes I added a good scope and mount and made one other change that I won't point out."

"You don't have to; I've seen a suppressor mount before."

"Shh. I'd like you to meet Gene and Al. If you recall what we were talking about last month, they'd be interested in getting a few details. Depending on what they learn, we might be inclined to join you."

"Who are they?"

"One is a retired General and the other is a retired Command Sergeant Major."

"What does a Brigadier know about fighting?"

"Who said Brigadier? I said General, think 4 stars, and a Command Sergeant Major is the highest enlisted rank. They spent most of their careers together and the Sergeant Major is a trained sniper. I'm talking too much, go meet them. Need any food; I might be able to give you a small discount?"

"We have our own garden, but I'd take some meat; how much for ground beef?"

"I'm sorry, but I can only discount it to \$4 a pound, but it's 90% lean."

"Wrap me up 15-pounds and hold it for me and I'll pay for it in silver after I talk to your friends."

What the hell, I added a round steak, a chuck roast and 6 minute steaks. This guy might turn into a friend and I'm sure he'd appreciate the extra beef. I had a plan of butchering 4 whole hogs, making ham, bacon, Canadian bacon and smoked picnics and grind the rest into sausage, but that would have to wait until the hogs put on more weight. The other cuts we'd get would be short ribs and they were usually popular, especially in the summer.

"You have my meat?"

"Yes, did you have a nice conversation?"

“I’ll be out to your farm tomorrow to work on planning. Say, this is more than I ordered, I can’t pay for that.”

“I increased your discount slightly and added a few things. Later in the year, we’ll have a fair amount of smoked meat and I’ll reserve some for you. Are you sure you’re not short of anything?”

“I’d kill for a can of coffee and a bundle of toilet paper.”

“I can do that, but keep your eyes open and see if you can find me replacements.”

“I’m Ben Johnson.”

“Sam George.”

“Yeah they told me. I hadn’t thought about the idea of having a trained sniper corps.”

“That goes back all the way to the Revolutionary War when the British with their muskets were up against Americans with rifles. Morgan required all of his sniper candidates to qualify by putting one round through a normal sized target of a British officer’s head. We’re well trained snipers, but are a bit on the short side of field training due to the limited time available. Everyone can make one shot kills to at least 500 meters and much longer with .50 caliber rifles.”

“What makes?”

“A Barrett M82, a Tac-50 and an Accuracy International AS-50. We may be limited on supplies, but the more success we have, the more supplies we’ll have available.”

“Plus those suppressors you didn’t tell me about.”

“We have a small number of A3s if any of you people don’t have military firearms.”

“You don’t know? At the time California passed their Assault Weapons Ban in 2000, there were over 70,000 AR15s in California that instantly became illegal and ever since, people have been buying parts and constructing their own. The only part you have trouble getting is the lower receiver because you can only legally have one with a ten round fixed magazine. They’re easy enough to get using a straw man with a FFL. And, if you’re going to do that, why not get a select fire lower receiver that’s complete?”

“So, between the load of SKSs, you got and the AR15s you manufactured, you’re well-armed?”

“We don’t have any heavy stuff and after I realized that it was your family and friends, I assume, who took on the CNG, I’ve thought long and hard about that. If we had even a few heavy weapons, it would even the odds.”

“We don’t have Abrams tanks or Bradley Armored Fighting Vehicles, so we’ll still be outgunned.”

“They’re both tracked vehicles and we’ll come up with improvised anti-tank mines; hopefully strong enough to take out the tread without killing the crew. We’d much prefer to give the crew a chance to join us instead of killing them outright.”

“I’ll have the toilet paper and coffee for you tomorrow. If you’re a Yuban Columbian coffee fan, you’re out of luck.”

“We switched to Folgers because it was cheap and available.”

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Six cans of coffee would barely dent our supply but could last Ben a year if they rationed it. I included 4 bundles, 120 rolls, of Charmin. I wondered what they had been using up until then, probably newspaper. I didn’t really get the chance to visit with Gene and Al on the way back from Fresno, nor when we got home. That left me wondering what they had worked out with Ben. They must have been satisfied enough with him to risk telling him where we lived.

It was a shame that we didn’t think about getting some M19 anti-tank mines from Barstow. They were plastic cases and couldn’t be detected by metal detectors. Plus, they required about 400 pounds of pressure to activate the mine, hence weren’t anti-personnel. At the time we were thinking about personal defense, not the Second American Revolution.

Back when the internet was up and I viewed the various survival related websites, I sensed an undertone among the members that suggested they had been pushed about as far as they could without taking further steps to right perceived wrongs. The US wasn’t the same place in 2008 as it had been in 1787 when the founding fathers wrote the Constitution. There was the debate between the federalists and republican-democrats over the provisions to be included. In 1798, the federalists had power in Washington DC and passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, followed in 1807 by the Insurrection Act. HR4986 passed the House and Senate and was signed by Dubya. It was significant in that it repealed all of the changes to the Insurrection Act made in the John Warner Bill. I thought it had been pocket vetoed; I didn’t know that, Ben had to enlighten me.

This might explain why, although all state Nation Guard units had been federalized, they weren’t assisting law enforcement. In and of itself, the Insurrection Act would define our penalty if we lost. The winners always make the rules, remember Nuremburg? Since George Bush signed HR4986, I was frankly surprised that Gene didn’t know about it, but he did say he had lost track of it. Therefore, Posse Comitatus was still the law of the land and TPTB couldn’t use the military as police. That didn’t mean they couldn’t try, but

to do so would be illegal, just like an Insurrection. Title 10 of the US Code provides in part:

§331: Federal aid for State governments

Whenever there is an insurrections in any State against its government, the President may, upon the request of its legislature or of its governor if the legislature cannot be convened, call into Federal service such of the militia of the other States, in the number requested by that State, and use such of the armed forces, as he considers necessary to suppress the insurrection.

§332: Use of militia and armed forces to enforce Federal authority

Whenever the President considers that unlawful obstructions, combinations, or assemblages, or rebellion against the authority of the United States, make it impracticable to enforce the laws of the United States in any State or Territory by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings, he may call into Federal service such of the militia of any State, and use such of the armed forces, as he considers necessary to enforce those laws or to suppress the rebellion.

§333: Interference with State and Federal law

The President, by using the militia or the armed forces, or both, or by any other means, shall take such measures as he considers necessary to suppress, in a State, any insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combination, or conspiracy, if it –

(1) so hinders the execution of the laws of that State, and of the United States within the State, that any part or class of its people is deprived of a right, privilege, immunity, or protection named in the Constitution and secured by law, and the constituted authorities of that State are unable, fail, or refuse to protect that right, privilege, or immunity, or to give that protection; or

(2) opposes or obstructs the execution of the laws of the United States or impedes the course of justice under those laws.

In any situation covered by clause (1), the State shall be considered to have denied the equal protection of the laws secured by the Constitution

§334: Proclamation to disperse

Whenever the President considers it necessary to use the militia or the armed forces under this chapter, he shall, by proclamation, immediately order the insurgents to disperse and retire peaceably to their abodes within a limited time.

§335: Guam and Virgin Islands included as “State”

For purposes of this chapter, the term “State” includes the unincorporated territories of Guam and the Virgin Islands.

Title 18 of the US Code provides in part:

§1385: Use of Army and Air Force as posse comitatus

Whoever, except in cases and under circumstances expressly authorized by the Constitution or Act of Congress, willfully uses any part of the Army or the Air Force as a posse comitatus or otherwise to execute the laws shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than two years, or both.

Accordingly, actions taken under the Insurrection Act have always been exempt from the Posse Comitatus Act.

“Interesting, where did you learn all of that, law school?”

“I copied the page on Wiki about the Insurrection Act and picked through it. Since Gene seems to think that a large portion of the military have called it quits, packed up and gone home, it would appear that our initial targets will be the CNG and the CSMR. Does anyone have any idea how large a force that represents?”

“The Army Guard is around 20,000. I’m not sure about the Air Guard, but they have a F16 Wing at the Fresno Airport.”

“Surely they don’t have as many people as the Army.”

“They don’t and most of their troops come from their Security Forces, no one else is armed.”

“What about the CSMR?”

“It’s not very large. I’m pretty sure the total compliment is under 500.”

“I’m going to leave the planning to you three. Our time can be better spent on the range, honing our skills. Ben, stop by the house for the coffee and toilet paper before you leave.”

“You have some? I sure will; that newspaper was a very poor choice. But, it was all that we could come up with.”

“Sarah, who have you decided you want as your observer?”

“Debbie. She positively accurate on the M14 and can cover my targets out to 1,000 meters. I’d say that we’re about equal when it comes to the M14. Her rifle is so accurate; I wouldn’t mind having a Super Match myself.”

“That’s the gun I always wanted and couldn’t afford. I’m just grateful you kids went together and got me the Loaded. Considering how much they cost, I never would have been able to afford a Super Match. The Tac-50 is already sighted in; all you need to do is verify it’s shooting to suit you.”

The thing about barrel weight was semi-critical. The Super Match had a Douglas stainless or carbon steel heavy weight barrel while the Loaded had a medium weight barrel. That particular model varied in price from around \$2,800 to over \$3,600. Without having one, I didn’t know how much difference there was between the two rifles but I still wanted a Super Match. It was spit in one hand and wish in the other...

One thing you had to pay attention to was the condition of your barrel. The first shot, called a cold-barrel/bore shot had a different striking point than subsequent shots. Since a sniper may only fire a single shot, it was imperative to master both the cold bore shot and the warm bore shot. A week later the Sergeant Major put in an appearance at the range.

“How goes the shooting?”

“We’ve been noting the cold bore and hot bore shots so we’ll know where to aim depending upon the circumstances. I think we pretty much have all of the rifles figured out.”

“Tomorrow morning, we’ll shoot qualifications. Assuming everyone passes, we move on to field training. I shortcut that to preparing a Ghillie suit, but now that we know what we’re going to be doing, we have about 6 weeks for field training. Ben will be selecting targets and the General and I will review them. Once we reach an accord, the action will begin. You should anticipate quick and dirty operations with us completing one and moving immediately to the next one. Once we’ve taken care of the Air Guard here in Fresno, we’ll lay low and let Ben and his people stage a few apparently disorganized attacks to throw TPTB off track.”

The Governator had been term limited in 2010 and we had a Democrat in Sacramento. Although we’d heard little from Governor Moonbeam, we’d seen some of his actions when he’d called up the CSMR and then left them on their own, unpaid. Not that there was a banking system anymore, but if there had been they could be paid by direct deposit because their pay ‘wasn’t regular’. One of the things high on Ben’s list was taking on the CSMR because of their protection racket.

“Ben said he doesn’t want to go after the pilots or the ground crews and if we take out the security forces, he’s willing to leave the others be.”

Bad Times – Chapter 20

“Why?”

“The Air Force units stationed at Fresno are responsible for the defense of the entire west coast. It’s been that way since they were forced to retire the F-15s. The only F-15s still flying are the Strike Eagles. Oh, while I’m at it, I should mention that unlike Army sniper school, we won’t drop anyone from training. For that reason, if no other, it is imperative that everyone does his/her very best. It could mean the difference between life and death.”

“Wait a minute, we could have been doing field craft all along, but you said we’d just make up the Ghillie suits and emphasize shooting.”

“Well, it worked, didn’t it? Is there any doubt that everyone will qualify tomorrow?”

“No. I believe everyone will qualify.”

“With you only concentrating on your shooting, it improved rapidly. The sniper school spends nearly double the time on the range. They spend more time on field craft, too, but our time is limited to the amount available.”

“They’re using the M24 SWS, right?”

“Hell no, they went with the Knight’s Armament SR-25, Army nomenclature is the M110. It’s the NATO 7.62 but uses the same gas system as the AR15.”

“What does it replace?”

“The M21 and the M24.”

“I hadn’t heard; when did they begin fielding that?”

“Uh, 2008.”

“Who has it?”

Army, Marines and Navy. I don’t know if they’ve issued any to the National Guard because the National Guard and the Reserves are always last to receive new weapons.”

“Tell me everything you know about the rifle.”

“The SR-25 rifle (Stoner Rifle, model 25) was developed by Reed Knight (owner of Knights Armament Co) and Eugene Stoner during early 1990s. In essence, the SR-25 was the AR-15 rifle scaled up to shoot 7.62x51/.308 Win ammunition, with up to 60% of parts of new rifle being interchangeable with standard AR-15 components. This rifle sold

well among civilian shooters who needed an accurate semi-automatic rifle in 7.62/.308 caliber for hunting or target shooting. This rifle also found a favor among US Military – during early 1990s it was adopted by US Navy SEAL groups, as Mark 11 Mod 0 sniper rifle system; use of Mk.11 Mod 0 rifle was later extended to US Marine Corps. Mark 11 Mod 0 rifle system included the semi-automatic SR-25 rifle, a quick-detachable sound suppressor, also developed by Knights Armament Co, Leupold Vari-X Mil dot telescopic sight, Harris bipod, 20-round magazines and other necessary accessories. In 2005, a modified version of the SR-25/Mk.11 rifle won US Army Semi-Automatic Sniper Rifle (XM110 SASR) competition, and today it is being issued to US Army snipers, in attempt to replace venerable M24SWS. A certain controversy exists about this replacement, as some experts doubt that Knight's semi-automatic XM110 rifle could equal long-range accuracy of the bolt-action M24.

“However, Knights Armament Co claims that SR-25 is capable of 0.5 MOA accuracy with match ammo, and in the field Mk 11 or XM110 rifle can provide accurate and rapid fire out to 600 meters or even more, depending on particular circumstances and proficiency of operator. Use of quick-detachable silencer/sound moderator also has several benefits; the most obvious being concealment of the operator's position, as silencer decreases the sound of gunshot and completely eliminates muzzle flash. Another, less obvious benefit is that silencer also acts as an effective muzzle brake, decreasing recoil and thus permitting faster follow-up shots.

“All rifles built on SR-25 platform share same basic action, which is based on AR15/M16 system. This is a gas-operated system with direct-impingement gas drive, which has no gas piston. Instead, powder gases are fed from the barrel and through a stainless-steel tube back into the receiver, and then into the cavity inside bolt carrier through the gas key. Inside the bolt carrier, powder gases push it back against the bolt, thus first causing the bolt to rotate and unlock from the barrel, and then to cycle the action. The rotary bolt has 7 radial lugs and improved extractor. Both upper and lower receiver halves are made from aircraft grade aluminum alloy, and connected by cross-pins. There is no “forward assist” button on the SR-25 rifles; the brass deflector is present. Barrels are of match class quality, and enclosed into free-floated forearm, fitted with Knights-made and designed Picatinny rails system. Because of AR15-style recoil buffer, which extends rearwards from the receiver, SR-25 cannot be fitted with folding buttstock; most rifles are fitted with fixed butt, while SR-25 carbines are fitted with telescoping buttstock. Trigger is also of match grade, fully adjustable.

“Military versions of the SR-25, known as Mk 11 Mod 0 (USN/USMC) and M110 (US Army) have some differences from civilian rifles. First of all, these rifles are fitted with proprietary sound moderator/silencer quick mount, located on the barrel just in front of the gas block. These rifles also finished to military specifications, and equipped with back-up iron sights, marked up to 600 meters and installed on folding bases. M110 rifle also features a different buttstock, which is adjustable for length of pull, as well as different style fore-end rail system and a flash hider on the barrel. Military rifles are usually issued along with a Harris bipod, Leupold variable power 3.5-10X sniper scope, and a number of other accessories, including soft and hard carrying cases.”

“And they retiring two better rifles and replacing it with a .30 caliber M16?”

“Yep, sort of like the original AR10 or the Stoner 63.”

“We could just win this; the military seems to be command by Van Gogh.”

“Huh?”

“Cut of his ear to spite his face, 24Dec1888. If the military makes any more improvements, we’ll be able to defeat them with bows and arrows.”

“I don’t know about that, they’ve fielded the M1A3 tank with the Crusader engine, the L55 gun, TUSK and more cooling for the electronics.”

“Yes and I’ll bet the NBC filters still catch fire.”

“True, but they’re getting there. Should have it licked by the time they get to the A6.”

“We’ll do quals in the morning and after everyone qualifies I’ll outline our field training program?”

“Right, 0800.”

Our qualifications required us to shoot for score at every range from 100 meters to 800 meters, regardless of which rifle we chose. Not everyone was totally trained on the Tac-50, but you had to qualify on it regardless. Everyone did, primarily because of the known distances. We broke for lunch and reassembled around 1pm.

“Alright, settle down. You have all shown that you can shoot both the M14 and the Mk 15. I fibbed a little when I told you that you wouldn’t have any training in field craft. My reasoning was simple, the most important skill was shooting because we won’t always have an opportunity to use the field craft you’re about to learn. Many a sniper in Iraq was shooting from the roof of a building and didn’t have a Ghillie suit on. You learned the fundamentals of range estimation, elevation and windage on the range; as you will soon learn, it’s much more difficult when you’re in an unfamiliar area. You won’t always be able to use those laser range finders and have to be able to estimate the range accurately.”

“Let me give you an example. M14 rifle, M118LR ammo and you estimate the range as 700 meters but it’s actually 800 meters. I know it may not seem like much, but those extra 100 meters means your bullet will strike 8” below where you intended. In sniper school you have to be able to correctly determine ranges or you get dropped. We have very little in the way of night vision, while our opponent is well equipped. He can see the laser beams with the night vision.”

“From now on, the training will be conducted east of town in the foothills of the Sierra-Nevada’s. You will be wearing the Ghillie suits and you will learn to blend in with your environment. In addition, you will learn to estimate ranges in differing situations, so help me God. If you make a range estimation error, it will be you getting killed, not me. Sarah, since you’re probably our best sniper and Debbie is a close second, I’m going to pair you two up. Take turns being the sniper and the observer until it doesn’t matter who is observing and who is sniping. The teams will be either all female or all male.”

“Why?”

“Because I say so. You’re going to be in the boonies for long periods with no bathroom facilities and that will make it easier on everyone involved. And, people won’t be distracted playing touchy-feely. We’ll leave for the foothills at 0500 tomorrow.”

We were equipped with 2 meter portable radios and spent the afternoon putting finishing touches on the Ghillie suits. There was only so much we could do until we learned what the terrain was like where we’d be training. Al confided in Gene and I that his initial emphasis would be on the range and windage so everyone could get a hit 90% of the time. From there, he’d advance to concealment. He wouldn’t be as demanding as sniper school. In sniper school they use trained sniper instructors to locate the students who are discovered unless they’re perfect. If they’re not found, they are allowed to shoot one blank and if they’re still not found, they may fire one live round. They will be disqualified if they manage to get too close.

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Six weeks later, the training was over and everyone had the basic skill set well ingrained. I suppose you wanted the details, but by the end of the day, I was too tired to write. We were given one week to recover and operations would begin. During that week, Al wanted to go shopping and wanted me to ride along.

“Where are you going?”

“Never mind, Sam; I’m looking for something I think you should have. We’re going to go into Los Angeles. The radiation is down in most places and I know just where I want to go.”

“I’m almost too sore to ride all the way to Los Angeles. What can you get in Los Angeles that you can’t find in Fresno?”

“Two things, both of which you be happy to have. Plus there is a third thing and I’m pretty sure where to get that. Get your rifle and get in, we’re burning daylight.”

We drove to LA and took I-405 south to Fountain Valley. This was the first stop and Al got the adapters that Surefire made specifically for the M14/M1A and 24 suppressors. He also got the 5.56 suppressors and the adapters. From there, he went to an Orange

County gun store he knew of and we broke in. Sitting there in the rack were two rifles and I would have taken either because they were Springfield Armory Super Match M1As. He said he had one more thing he wanted and since he'd found 2 Super Match rifles, he needed 2. The store carried what he wanted, but it took him a while to find everything. He was looking for Zeiss 6-24x72 SAM. He said that the mounts were part of the system and all we needed was an A.R.M/S/ base assembly. We picked up two A.R.M.S. #18 bases and looked around in the back room in case the dealer had any SA High Capacity mags. He didn't so we turned around and head home.

"I've always wanted a Super Match but never thought I'd have one. Debbie let me shoot hers and it's mighty sweet."

"She told me and since I was pretty sure where I could find you one, I decided it was worth the gas to find out. Which one are you taking?"

"I kind of like the Marine Corps Camo Stock."

"If that's the case, I'll give the one with the carbon barrel and walnut stock to the General. It's still better than the M14s he has."

"What do you intend to do with the extra suppressors?"

"We'll replace the Gem Tech and those from Advanced Armament with the Surefire. It will ensure that we have suppressors that will never wear out. Once everyone is equipped, we'll pass the remaining suppressors out to Ben and his people. It will be up to them to get the adapters mounted. How's your back?"

"Huh?"

"When we left, you were complaining you were too sore to ride to LA. Are you still sore?"

"As a matter of fact, I am. At the same time, I'm happy; you have no idea how much that rifle means to me."

"Good, because you're going to need to mount the scope and get it sighted in. Since it's a new rifle with a heavier barrel, you need to make up a new notebook with all the data on the rifle."

"Gene and I will shoot together; he needs to do the same thing."

"What would you think if I paired you with the General?"

"I'd love it, but I figured you'd pair up with him."

“Count the people, Sam. There are you, Ron and Bill, Sarah and Cindy, the General, Tom and Sean, Debbie and Carol and me. I’m the odd man out. Shirley and Ruth will stay here and keep an eye on the livestock and do the canning. Glena and Julie and their kids can help out.”

“I am counting the people Al; you left out Will Robinson and his family. We don’t have an odd man; do you still want me to team with Gene?”

“You’re right, I forgot Danger. Do you want to team with him and I’ll team with the General?”

“It works for me. When do think we’ll go out?”

“In a few days, as soon as Ben lets us know.”

It turned out that everyone would be using the M14/M1A with M118LR ammo. The Barrett, Tac-50 and the AS-50 would tag along, primarily as anti-matériel rifles. Our first strike would take place in Oildale on the northern edge of Bakersfield. The second strike would be much closer to home, Chowchilla. The third strike would be far afield, San Luis Obispo and the fourth strike would be in Fresno. They also had a fifth strike planned for Bakersfield. This was primarily intended to get them headed in the wrong direction, further south.

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The CNG and the CSMR had set themselves up in Oildale at Kern County-Meadows Field, a commercial airport (BFL). In terms of background, Mexicana airlines had begun flights to BFL but were forced to withdraw due to high oil prices. They had also been served by Delta, Express Jet, United Express and US Airways (America West). The terrain did not favor us in this attack and we would actually get to use the Ghillie suits. To the west of the airport was Hwy 99 and to the east the Kern Oil Field. Also adjacent is the huge Kern Front Oil Field, north of town, and the smaller Fruitvale Oil Field, to the southwest.

We had to help our brothers in arms. Oildale is a conservative town. Country music legends Buck Owens and Merle Haggard and NASCAR driver Kevin Harvick are from Oildale. Oildale has a long history of racism, and was once a major center for the Ku Klux Klan. Because of Oildale's conservative nature, along with its reputation for poverty and racism, the town's population is often derided by liberals and nearby Bakersfield as “pecker woods” (which many of the white supremacists in the area call themselves- “O.P.W.’s” or “Oildale Pecker Woods”), “Dalian” for subsiding in a dale, or “08ers” due to the Oildale zip code which ends in 08; “Redneck Oildale” is often the subject of redneck and white trash jokes. Despite this history, Hispanics and African Americans have become more accepted by the town in recent years.

By brothers in arms, I refer, of course, to their conservative nature. They must have most of their rifles in plastic sewer pipes, just waiting for a chance to dig them up. Our mission was to give them that chance. As far as Oildale went as a community, you still had to be careful which beer joint you entered. The time was 2pm and the sun was in the west.

“It’s about a mile and a half south to Meadows Field. Let’s spread out and move to the southeast. When we’re in place, we’ll give Ben a call and they will start the diversion attack and we’ll pick ‘em off one-by-one.”

Click, click.

The closer we moved to Meadows Field, the more critical our concealment became. I occasionally caught sight of one of the others, but it was rare. Unless a sentry was posted in the tower and glassing the area northwest of the airport, we wouldn’t been seen. From what I could see, they weren’t paying attention. Maybe this bunch had been transferred from Minot AFB after they failed yet another nuclear security test. Nah, not even Air Force Security was this sloppy.

“Team One in Position.” That was Al and Gene.

A few moments later, “Team Two is in position.” That was Will and me.

A few minutes later, “Team Four is in position.” Sarah and Cindy.

Over the next several minutes the other teams checked in. Once we were in place and had selected primary, secondary and tertiary targets, Al radioed Ben, “Unit One is in position and you’re free to go.”

Ben’s group was Unit Two and we’d shared what we had with them, providing machine guns, rockets, grenades and so forth. They had stolen some Hummers from the military units in Fresno and were dressed in ACUs. A casual glance shouldn’t reveal that they weren’t what they seemed to be. They blew through the entrance to the airport guns blazing. A large number of the soldiers there were caught out in the open and went down in the cascade of fire. This was only the diversion and we opened up on our selected targets. Our rifles couldn’t be heard above the heavy fire Unit Two was providing and we did what we were supposed to do, pick ‘em off one-by-one.

This was the longest battle I’d been involved in, it lasted almost 30 minutes. If those troops realized they were under sniper fire, it sure didn’t show. When it was over, we took count and discovered that Ben had two dead and 4 wounded one seriously. We took the seriously wounded man to White Hospital in southern Bakersfield. It had been renamed and now was called Health South Bakersfield Rehab Hospital.

What’s more the standing order was El Degüello. It eliminated the possibility of anyone in Unit One or Unit Two being identified. It would also send a clear message to TPTB

that this group of rebels would be very difficult to deal with. We collect all the weapons we could use and a few more Hummers. We had a ten ton truck loaded with supplies, mostly ordnance. We found some replacement ACUs among the supplies and most everyone ended up with one set.

In order to keep our illusion building, we drove straight through to Chowchilla and attacked the next morning. There weren't many soldiers there and we didn't need a diversion. What we did, instead, was start the ball rolling using sniper fire and when there were no more targets; Unit Two did a brief but thorough building to building search. If we missed anyone, we assumed the Chowchilla residents would take care of the problem.

We needed fuel and a goodnight's rest before we headed San Luis Obispo. We were headed for Camp San Luis Obispo National Guard Reserve. Next to Fresno, this would be one of our largest targets. It was home to the 223rd Regiment and the 649th MP Company, according to available information. North of Ranger Road was a closed off area that could contain unexploded ordnance. We went down 101 to Foothill Boulevard and cut across to the PCH. The PCH cuts right across the southern end of the Camp.

These people were on alert; apparently our previous two actions had made the military news. We determined that the odds were in our favor, we were only outnumbered 2:1. And, we could see them while they couldn't see us (Unit One). This time, we took the .50 calibers loaded with Mk 211 MP. Al had his AS-50 and Sarah had my Tac-50. We infiltrated to our desired shooting locations and Al passed the word to Ben to begin the diversion. We'd use the same tactic that had worked in Oildale, with one change. That change was simple; we were carrying two anti-matériel rifles.

As soon as the diversion began with Ben's people blowing through the Camp Main Gate, Al and Sarah opened up. They had discussed and divided the targets over their 2-meter radios. If Sarah got tired, Cindy would take over. They claim that the recoil from the .50 cal is about the same as a shotgun. I agree, a 10-gauge. Years before, an uncle now dead, had a 10-gauge and he took me to the gravel quarry and I shot it once. It was something else and the .50 cal reminds me of that shotgun.

Meanwhile the remainder of Unit One was picking off their targets, or trying to. I told you that they must have been informed, they nearly immediately went to ground e.g. under cover. The task shifted from the snipers with M14/M1As to the snipers with the Mk 211 MP. Unit Two was doing well because they were better armed than they had been in Oildale because several of the new Hummers were M1114s. This would be a battle to remember for some time to come. Those of us with the M14/M1As continued to fire to keep those soldiers under cover using suppressive fire.

Well now, it took almost 90 minutes to put an end to this attack. With a standing order of El Degüello, the cleanup took another 30 minutes. This wasn't Vietnam and we didn't count bodies, but were I to hazard a guess, I say somewhere between 125 and 150. We

had no dead and one very seriously wounded a M1114 gunner. He expired before we could get him treatment. With our limited resources, every loss hurt us badly.

The dead man was nobody I knew, although I'd seen him around. With most of Unit One coming from my family I was worried near to death. Al and Ben concluded that we needed some down time before going back to Bakersfield.

"I can see now where we should have spent more time on field craft. If the group in Oildale or the people at Camp San Luis Obispo had been paying more attention we could have been in trouble. I also want to ask if you saw *Predator*."

"I saw *Predator*, what about it?"

"In that scene where they went into the village, one of the actors had a multi-shot grenade launcher. What kind of grenade launcher was it?"

"That was either the MM-1 or Milkor MGL. How many shots was it, six or twelve?"

"Six."

"Six shots is the Milkor is made in South Africa. Why do you ask?"

"Do you think we could come up with one?" I asked. (Point of information. The gun in the movie was a fake adapted from a flare launcher.)

"I'm sure that one of the companies that provide weapons for movies probably has one or two. I have no idea who those companies might be."

"Would the Marine Corp have any at Barstow?"

"I wouldn't know. They're used by Special Forces and the Marines have Force Recon and the Navy has the SEALs."

"Wrong, Marine Force Reconnaissance was a naval expeditionary force that provided deep reconnaissance, surveillance and communications in support of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force until the respective Companies were disbanded as of February 2006. The Marines within Force Recon were integrated into Marines Special Operations Command, or reinforced within the Divisions' Recon Battalions."

"It sounds like they should have some down at Barstow, but General and I have been there and as have Debbie and Tom. I think you should go and maybe take Sean with you."

"They weigh about 12½ pounds, empty."

"Will you go Al?"

“One day trip down and back, sure why not.”

“Gene has the forms for requisitions on his computer.”

“I’ll go tomorrow. You folks rest up a day and we’ll work a little more on field craft.”

“I’m tired.”

“You should be out gallivanting around the country, one day you’re one place and a day later, your half a state away in another. We got by just fine here, nobody showed up demanding protection and such. We were ready for them if they did. I never thought I’d live to see the day when I had to keep a rifle close at hand.”

“Did you get a lot of canning done?”

Bad Times – Chapter 21

“A fair amount, we didn’t have anything we couldn’t can so there’s no extra for the Farmer’s Market this week.”

“It’s especially good when the potatoes come in Ruth. We’ll have potatoes, squash, pumpkins and all of the late crops. We’re resting up today, going to do a little field craft training for a few days and then hit Bakersfield. I don’t know what has been planned to after that.”

“Won’t they be able to use a map and push pins to determine where you’re operating from?”

“No, the whole idea was to slant the hits away from our area of operations to mislead anyone who tried that.”

“How far away will you be going?”

“I don’t know, but San Bernardino might be as far as we venture. There are multiple places we could hit in that area.”

“Just be careful, I don’t know what I would do without you.”

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“Milkor MGL. They told me that the few they had had been issued to Special Forces. They did offer an alternative, the China Lake Pump-Action Grenade Launcher. It’s sort of an overgrown pump shotgun with 3 in the magazine plus 1 in the chamber. It’s doesn’t weigh much more than the M-79, coming in at 10.2 pounds loaded. However, all you can use in it are the pointed nose HE grenades. We didn’t have any, so I added them to the requisition.”

“What song and dance did you use in Barstow?”

“My story was that with the 4 strikes against the National Guard and CSMR, we needed something better than our M203s. Most of the pump-action grenade launchers are museum pieces, we were lucky to get the three they held back. That Gunnery Sergeant told me that they made less than 50.”

“But, you got three?”

“Yep, including the one they had in a display case. The Gunny told me that they only functioned well with the HE rounds with the pointed nose so we added those to the requisition. I got 10 cases of those. Tell me why you wanted them.”

“There were situations that came up where a MK19 would have been perfect. The only grenade launchers we had besides the Mk19s were the M203s and they were on the M16s that we didn’t carry. I wanted some kind of multi-shot grenade launcher that was light enough to carry with the M1As. Since we’re down to carrying 9 magazines of M118LR, we could carry some kind of grenade launcher, the weight trade-off for the 6 magazines we aren’t carrying would compensate.”

“Tomorrow, I’m going to do the test that they do in sniper school and see if I can find you as you try to sneak up on me. It’s pass/fail and you have to get within a certain range, but not too close. If you get into position without detection, you’ll fire one blank round. If I can’t detect you then, you can fire one live round.”

It took three days to test everyone and we all passed. Al said we didn’t need further training and wondered aloud how everyone had managed to get so close without being detected.”

Sniper approached the instructor by being a sneaky bastard, Sergeant Major! (Patriot Games)

Bakersfield is the county seat for Kern County. It’s located halfway between LA and Fresno, 110-miles either way. Bakersfield differs from many California cities in that it is overwhelmingly conservative. According to the Bay Area Center for Research, Bakersfield is ranked as the 8th most conservative city in the United States, and the most conservative city in California. Factors for Bakersfield being largely conservative include the petroleum production around the city, and the city’s religious atmosphere. As a result, the city is a favorite stopping place for many Republican presidential candidates.

I failed to understand how a city as conservative as Bakersfield came under the thumb of the CNG and the CSMR. I would later learn that the answer was simple, the Governor had flooded Bakersfield with troops and because the CNG had been federalized, but not used, he sent a large portion of their force to Bakersfield, noting the conservatism of the city.

Only a portion of the troops stationed in Bakersfield had been at Meadows Field with the majority taking up residence in the downtown, high rise (9 stories) hotels. Ben’s initial plan was to attack at night, hopefully catching a majority of the troops asleep in bed. Reconnaissance revealed the short coming of that plan. After the attack on Oildale, or Meadows Field, the forces had been redistributed to prevent an attack from north or south 99 and east or west 58. The troops were well emplaced and had a Platoon of armor at each of the approaches. The tanks were the M1A2s, not the newer M1A3s, but none the less had tremendous firepower and protection.

“Can we take out the Abrams with AT-4s?”

“Not with a frontal assault. The only thing that will take out an Abrams in a frontal assault is another Abrams. If we could get behind them, we could use a LAW on the am-

mo container or the engine compartment. Either one would disable the vehicle, one by eliminating the ammo and the other by eliminating the power.”

“It would have to be my group that moves through their lines and get in position to launch the LAWs. What would you recommend, Al, the ammo compartment or the engine compartment?”

“Sam, either would work and shooting the ammo would be much easier than shooting the engine. To shoot the engine, you’d need to be in an elevated position.”

“We could use four teams and carry 3 LAWs per person. It would reduce the likelihood of our being discovered and give us enough rounds to be sure the job gets done.”

“Ok, we’ll use teams two through five. You can plan on taking your rifles and seven magazines plus three LAWs.”

“I’m not sure how close we can get, are 3 LAWs apiece enough?”

“If you each take four you should be able to shoot the stationary targets from about 200 meters, but, the closer you get, the better.”

“If we take our time, we should be able to get really close. I’ll talk it over with the others and see what they think.”

I did just that and everyone agreed that this was a case where more was better; we’d be carrying 4 LAWs each.

“Each of the four locations will be different. North and south 99 are fairly wide open and east 58 is three lanes, too. The only close up location will be west 58. They parked the Abrams staggered at that location. This will be a night op so you should have an advantage. Just remember, at night, sound seems to be amplified so you gain invisibility but must maintain noise control. We’ll kick off around 0200; that should put everyone in position by 0500. If you run into a problem, call it in and we’ll work on a solution. When everyone checks in I’ll give the go signal. Any questions? Good, let’s be careful out there.”

Team two, Will and I, took south 99; team three, Ron and Bill took 58 west; team four Sarah and Cindy took 99 north; and, team five, Tom and Sean took 58 east. We agreed among ourselves to use a bounding overwatch, just in case. We were all at our jump off points by 10pm and settled for a nap. I wasn’t quite as worried this time; everyone had proved themselves to be very capable. Team one, Al and Gene, would be a backup as would team six, Debbie and Carol.

We kicked off at 0200 wearing the latest issue military night vision, courtesy of the CNG. We moved slowly, but steadily, and the last team checked in at 0505. Al asked our ranges and they all proved to be around 75-100 meters. When the sun began to rise, he

gave the order. Each team had 4 LAWs extended ready to fire and could rapidly employ the others, as the situation warranted. The real problem with the LAWs was that it gave the OpFor your position, so we'd all agreed to shoot, disable and scoot.

"Fire."

It took 21 LAWs to take out 16 Abrams and they were operational but only had their six spare, emergency hull stored rounds. They're rather difficult to pull out and load and it gave us time to take out the grunts on the ground around the tanks. With that accomplished, we gave the engines a snack, one each AN-M14 TH3 incendiary hand grenade. Those tanks wouldn't go anywhere without a full engine swap and repairs to the ammo storage compartments. While the M1A1 carries 40 rounds and the A2 carries 42 rounds, six are stored outside of the special ammo compartment in the main hull.

Question, there is much debate of the Leopard II with its L55 gun compared to A2 with its L44 gun. Which is the better gun? The question is irrelevant because the US uses DU sabots while the Germans use tungsten sabots. Anyone care to guess which one has more penetrating power? An American sabot round will punch through the frontal armor of an Abrams and the Leopard II won't. Besides, the M1A3s have the L55.

Our retreat from our firing positions used the same bounding overwatch except it was daylight and we moved quicker. We could hear a major battle taking place in Bakersfield. With each success Ben's Patriot Movement gained additional troops, each supplying their own uniform, usually BDUs or older fatigues and a personal weapon or two, it was quite an assortment, but there were a few standard cartridges including .45acp, 9mm, 5.56x45, 7.62x51 and .30-06.

The supply of weapons and ammo increased following each attack because we salvaged all the serviceable weapons and ammo. We even took MREs when we could find them. I much prefer ALICE to MOLLE, but in fact used a Tac Force vest because it was what I had and was all I needed. After our egress, we'd joined the others and helped eliminate more targets. I suppose I should point out that, once the battle was joined, all those hidden firearms distributed among the Bakersfield population made an appearance and the CNG and CSMR was caught in crossfire.

While our sniper teams were unscathed, the same couldn't be said for Unit Two. More than Company size, they had 5 killed, 11 seriously wounded and maybe 40 with minor wounds. Those with minor wounds were treated and released. A local helicopter pilot offered to fly the seriously wounded to Fresno as soon as they could be safely moved. He said it would take two trips and said he could refill the Blackhawk from the fuel supplies at FAT, Fresno Yosemite International Airport.

We recovered enough LAWs and AT-4s to replenish our stock plus some. In addition we acquired over a dozen Javelin anti-tank missiles and more machineguns of various sizes. One of the units had a sniper who was equipped with the M107 and his spotter an

M21. We had to wait, though, the battle raged all day and all night and only ended the morning of the second day.

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“Mr. President, we’ve been hesitant to bring this to your attention, but we have a problem.”

“What kind of problem, General?”

“It started in California, just a small attack by a small group of rebels against the CNG and the CSMR. However, it’s spread. We’re not sure if it is the same group or several groups, but a total of 5 locations in California have been attacked. All of the CNG and CSMR in those 5 locations have been killed, either outright in battle or executed after.”

“You say it started in California?”

“Yes sir, apparently the group has ham communications and has been spreading its message all over the country. We’ve had attacks in 23 states so far and the number seems to be rising. With the desertion rates we’ve experienced, we’re not certain we could mount a force to put down the insurgents.”

“Are we safe here? There’s no way they can break in is there?”

“No sir, no one can get past those blast doors. However, unless we put a check on this insurgency, you won’t have a country to lead.”

“Put together a plan of some kind and let me review it.”

“Yes sir, how is he doing?”

“The doctors say he had a relapse and has to be heavily sedated with Thorazine. At the moment, he’s evidencing the Thorazine Shuffle and incapable of making decisions, rational or irrational.”

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“Was it bad Sam?”

“No worse than I expected Ruth. I think we have to slow the pace somewhat and limit our attacks to those that are meaningful. We stirred the soup pretty good up to this point. We’ve gotten radio reports that indicate the insurgency is spreading. The last I heard, it had spread to 13 other states.”

“Let me bring you up to date. As of earlier in the day, it had spread to 23 other states with nearly half of the country rebelling against TPTB because they’ve failed their con-

stituents. We haven't had a Presidential announcement since Biden said he was taking over for Obama. I've been working the radio, telling them of the successes in California."

"You didn't give any sort of clue where we are from, did you?"

"I may be slow sometimes, but I'm definitely not stupid. I sat down and tried to remember back when we both had jobs and were doing our best to be a little prepared. It has been a long journey, what with the war and all that's happened since. That pension sure dried up fast when China nuked us."

"Everything changed when China nuked us. The American spirit is indomitable and if the government won't discharge its duty in helping the population recover we'll eliminate the current government and replace it something more like what the founding fathers intended. I believe that any new government will look to states' rights as the most important provision of the Bill of Rights."

"Will we get a new Constitution?"

"There's not much wrong with the old one Ruth. They can wrap the amendments into the body of the document and pretty much keep it as it is. We need to eliminate a few laws, like the Insurrection Act, although it shouldn't be that difficult. We won't have the federalists to deal with when we do it. I guess you could say that I'm a Jeffersonian."

"Republicanism is the value system of governance that has been a major part of American civic thought since the American Revolution. It stresses liberty and rights as central values, makes the people as a whole sovereign, rejects aristocracy and inherited political power, expects citizens to be independent and calls on them to perform civic duties, and is strongly opposed to corruption. American Republicanism was founded and first practiced by the Founding Fathers in the 18th century. This system was based on early Roman and English models and ideas. It formed the basis for the American Revolution, the Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Constitution (1787), as well as critical statements from Abraham Lincoln and other Statesmen. It is not the same as democracy, for republicanism asserts that people have inalienable rights that cannot be voted away by a majority of voters. In a government made up as a Constitutional Republic, the Rule of Law and clearly defined constitutional principles dictate the actual administration of government."

"Maybe you should run for Congress when the Revolution is over."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"I'm not corrupt."

I meant that when I said it, however, it later occurred to me that that was exactly the problem that irritated me about the present political system, corrupt politicians. Many had been on the take, directly or indirectly. Even war heroes weren't exempt. The country had been put on the road to socialism on March 4, 1933. We had the First New Deal, the Second New Deal and WW II. We elected Lyndon rather than Barry and ended up with Tricky Dicky. We had a good one next, but he didn't get elected and we voted for good ol' Jimmy. We decided we didn't like him and went for Ronnie Ray-gun. Next, we voted in Dubya Senior, but he didn't last and King Bill began his reign. Dubya came next and he stirred up all kinds of trouble, which got Osama Obama elected.

We didn't have a next target and it suited me just fine. We could take the time to spread the message revealing what worked and what didn't. By this time, we'd probably eliminated a significant portion of the CSMR. The CNG, on the other hand was much larger and we couldn't take on the 19 plus thousand still remaining.

"We'll have some downtime, right?"

"We still have a sizeable CNG force to deal with. The General and I talked to Ben and he suggested we hold off on actions like what we did in Bakersfield. He wants us to do what snipers do best, put out the teams in different locations and start picking them off."

"One-by-one?"

"One at a time, at least; if you fire several shots from the same location, it is sometimes possible for the OpFor to locate you, even with a suppressor. Remember that General Hathcock shot? He crawled on his belly for three days to get in position and as soon as he shot, he bailed out. You might get two or three shots because of the suppressors, but you'll have to boggie."

When we went to Barstow that first time, there was a question concerning rank insignia. We resolved it by wearing the subdued insignia on our PASGT Helmets. We'd been wearing those helmets ever since and some must have thought we actually were military. Al had a PASGT Helmet with the CSM insignia and Gene and his children wore the appropriate rank insignia on their ACHs. Just to keep everything even, we got Staff Sergeant rank insignia for all of our other snipers and they wore subdued stripes on their helmets.

Let me tell you, being a sniper isn't without its just rewards; you end up with scrapes, bruises, sore muscles in places you didn't know about and holes in your knees. After a week off to heal, we moved out, careful to avoid the roadblocks that has sprung up as a result of our previous activities. Our first hurdle proved to be military personnel (us) driving around in civilian vehicles. We improvised and adapted, using the unarmed Hummers we'd taken during the five strikes. A Hummer doesn't get good mileage, but as long as we could get fuel from Kettleman City, we didn't care. We drove around with the back of the Hummers filled with those yellow diesel cans.

The ACH is a marked improvement over PASGT and Al told me that while we were out, he'd find enough ACHs and Improved Outer Tactical Vests for our entire group. I took that to mean the people on the acreage, not including the Patriot Militia in Fresno. The attacks we'd carried off had seen them well equipped so they dressed and looked like soldiers. It doesn't take many combat engagements to separate the wheat from the chaff so they were turning into a real fighting machine. If Al was out looking, that meant that Gene would be with him and cover his back.

The lightweight helmet is the Marine Corps replacement for the PASGT combat helmet. As it is nearly identical to untrained eyes in shape to the PASGT, it is still called the "Fritz helmet" or "K-pot". Though heavier than the Army's ACH, its larger size also offers more protection and is lighter than the PASGT. Featuring a V-neck strap and improved fit, it is much more comfortable than the PASGT. It entered service in late 2004 and completely replaced the PASGT by 2009.

I figured it was just what we needed, more weight to lug around while we crawled through the boonies. Being dressed up as soldiers and driving a Hummer didn't always assure us clear passage through roadblocks. We got asked for military ID cards aka CAC or Common Access Cards. As of 2007, DoD had issued over 13 million smart cards. As of the same date, approximately 3 million unexpired or active CACs are in circulation. The new CACs included a RFID chip. And, thanks to Al, we all had them. He had blanks and one of those machines like Costco used to put your picture on a membership card. Except, his did color and his laptop interfaced with the RFID chip so all the information on the CACs was correct (sort of).

I said sort of because not all of our members had been in the military. But, that said, the Social Security number, while is clearly not for identification, was what he programmed into the ID. The military did away with serial numbers beginning in 1974 and replaced them with your SSN. Some of the checkpoints had CAC readers and some didn't. When they first they ran our military IDs through the reader, they passed, glory hallelujah. How easy is it to stop your opposition if they're driving a military vehicle, have recently started wearing the most current utility uniform and have a valid military ID? We didn't try to take out roadblocks, as that would be a sure sign that rebels were in the area.

It almost seemed as if most of the liberals who were anti-gun, anti-oil, anti-everything lived in the big cities. Like Hank's song said, *Country Boy Can Survive*. He even explained it in his song, *I got a shotgun, rifle and a 4-wheel drive; and shoot him with my old .45*. The only thing he left out was his M1A.

Do you know why more people don't own M1As? The first reason is that they cost too damned much. If you get one from Springfield Armory or Fulton Armory, you'll end up spending about the same money. Or, you can take the same money and buy up to a year's supply of food. There are cheaper ones out there, but I wouldn't trust them, although Smith Enterprises builds a good one. The second reason people don't own one is that they're heavy and the ammo is heavy. Good surplus ammo was very hard to find before the war. After the war, about the only source was a military armory.

With that in mind, we headed to a logistics base just south of Ft. Irwin. We parked as close as we dared and began moving in. Our objective was to find the bunker(s) storing M118LR ammo. Eventually, we got close enough to observe and noted the times the guards drove through the bunker area looking for anything amiss. They must have been short of fuel, the trips weren't often. As ammo goes, 1,000-rounds of 7.62x51mm weigh about 70-pounds per thousand. Will and I could each carry one case off, hide it and come back for more. We agreed we could make three trips between guard inspections. The military uses a specially designed padlock with a case harden hasp. They were the 831-B which utilized a 6-pins Medeco Biaxial military restricted cylinder.

"I've never seen a padlock like that."

"I have and the only way to open one without the key is to pick it. They're generally considered to be unpickable."

"Can't we hammer it open?"

"No. And we can't cut the hasp either. About the only way I know to get one off without a key is with explosives."

"What explosives? Did you bring explosives?"

"I have one M757 in my pack."

"What's that?"

"The 1995-1996 USMC Ground Ammunition War Material Requirements (WMR) Study resulted in a 51% increase to the Combat Requirement for Demolition Kits, M183, (DoD Identification Code (DODIC) M757). The Demolition charge M183 is used primarily in breaching obstacles or demolition of large structures where large charges are required (Satchel Charge). The charge assembly M183 consists of 16 block demolition charges M112, four priming assemblies and carrying case M85. Each Priming assembly consists of a five-foot length of detonating cord assembled with two detonating cord clips and capped at each end with a booster. The components of the assembly are issued in the carrying case. The demolition charge M112 is a rectangular block of Composition C-4 approximately 2 inches by 1.5 inches and 11 inches long, weighing 1.25 Lbs. When the charge is detonated, the explosive is converted into compressed gas. The gas exerts pressure in the form of a shock wave, which demolishes the target by cutting, breaching, or cratering. Got that, or do I need to repeat myself?"

Bad Times – Chapter 22

“Won’t an explosion bring the Marines running?”

“Without a doubt, so I intend to set 4 charges, 3 in a far removed location and one here. I’ll set this one first and you can standby the radio until I tell you to activate the initiator. I’ll yank the other 3 about the same time and they may not realize there have been 4 explosions. I’ll use up the remaining C-4 in the other locations; here we only need part of a stick.”

“Wait just a minute, you mean to tell me you’ve been driving around with explosives in your backpack?”

“Well yeah, they wouldn’t fit in my pocket.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Are you familiar with expression need to know? Well, you didn’t need to know until now. Are you familiar with explosives?”

“Not really, only what I’ve seen on TV.”

“I rest my case, your honor.”

I used just enough C-4 to demolish the lock and inserted the cap. I handed Will the initiator and told him to pull the string and run like hell when I called him on the radio. How did we know the bunker contained M118LR? We’d seen where they got it from the only other time I’d been here. I used the remainder of the plastic explosive and got the 3 large charges ready to go. With any kind of luck, they’d blow the bunker doors off their hinges. That should keep the Marines busy and they probably only check the rifle ammo bunker later. I started one igniter and yelled go on my radio and then quickly beat feet back to where Will was hunkered down. The explosives on lock went off about the time the second large charge went off.

“Go, go, go.”

“These are heavy.”

“Tell me about it, I’m older than you are. Keep your eye open for the Marines.”

One of the large explosive charges resulted in a secondary explosion. Bunkers are laid out to allow for this so an explosion in one bunker won’t set off surrounding bunkers. That much they got right. However, they must have missed the small explosion that blew up the lock because we didn’t see any Marines. We managed to carry 50 cases each and stash them out in the boonies away from the bunker area. Now we had to fig-

ure out how to haul 3 tons of ammo back to the acreage. Only a 24' U-Haul truck was rated over 3 tons.

We went back to our vehicle and drove down to Barstow, now a genuine ghost town. I only mentioned that because of Calico Ghost Town. We got the truck and two ATVs with trailers. We drove both vehicles back to Ft. Irwin and unloaded the ATVs and trailers which we used to haul the ammo to the U Haul truck. There was room in the truck for the ATVs and trailers and it would be a shame to return them when we could use them on the acreage.

For information only:

Polaris Industries Inc. today announced the company has completed first production and received orders from the US Department of Defense for its newest military vehicle, the MV800 4X4 ATV. The MV800 is Polaris' first military machine to feature the Patriot Engine with electronic direct fuel injection. The 760cc, 40hp spark ignition engine is powered by JP8, the US military's standard fuel.

The new engine, developed in partnership with Australian-based Orbital Corporation, provides the new MV800 ATV with a patented, unique technology that allows the engine to significantly surpass traditional, diesel compression engines in this size with almost twice the horsepower. This produces an overall vehicle performance that is the same or similar to the company's gasoline-powered family of Ultra-light Tactical Vehicles for the military. In addition to running on JP8, the Patriot Engine can operate on emergency fuels including gasoline, JP5 and highway diesel.

"The JP8 powered MV800 and its Patriot Engine are major steps for Polaris as we continue to strive to produce cutting-edge products that meet requirements defined by those serving to protect our country" said Mark McCormick, managing director, Polaris Defense. "Our war-fighters are operating in some of the world's harshest conditions. We are committed to providing them with vehicles that can make their job easier and increase their mission effectiveness. The MV800 is built to do just that."

The MV800 follows in the footsteps of the MV700, the lead model in the Polaris Defense family of gasoline-powered tactical vehicles. They later sold them on the civilian market and we picked up two MVRS800 6x6. These could haul 1,800-pounds and tow another 2,000 pounds. It only took one trip to move the 6,000-pounds of ammo. JP-5 was available at NAS Lemoore and JP-8 was available from some CNG armories.

The motto, *Who Dares Wins* belongs to the British SAS. More and more it appeared that we might be able to claim the same motto, at least temporarily. They earned it because they were brave and we probably earned it because we were just too damned stupid not to try anything that came up. For a small sniper force, we weren't extraordinarily well equipped. We had 3 .50 caliber rifles, one M1A/M14 for every sniper, pump 4-shot grenade launchers, suppressors, shotguns for back up, .45 caliber or 9mm cali-

ber pistols all loaded with Gold Dot and more LAW rockets than we could use up any-time soon.

While we held ourselves aloof from the Fresno Militia, they were still our friends and we occasionally shared when we scored an unusual find. They had a few of their members who were working on becoming snipers in their own right, so we shared half the M118LR with them, only keeping 50,000-rounds. You have to realize that we also used it as our practice ammo, so we thought that was pretty generous. Plus, we sort of figured we could always go back for more and take a portable cutting torch with us. Additionally, if we could find just one of those locks with the keys, we could put our own lock on the bunker and over a period of days, completely empty it.

We had 6 sniping teams so we only had about 8,333-rounds per team, not counting what we already had, around 5,000-rounds per shooter. Out to about 200-yards, it didn't matter what we shot, the surplus ammo was just fine. Any further and we switched to the M118LR.

To further our cause, I made all of my children read FMFM-1A-3A, titled, A Book of Fourth Generation Tactical Decision Games.

Why, you may ask? Let me tell you an insurgency or a revolution is almost always fought as a 4th Generation War. I can think of three examples of 4th GW in modern times, the Vietnam War, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The nomenclature FMFM represents an acronym Fleet Marine Force Manual. While we weren't above stealing from the Marines, we didn't kill them either. They were, as you must now know, guarding our ammo supply.

Before the war, I was checking on the internet for Lake City 7.62x51mm for sale. I use Yahoo search engine and ended up with a link. As nearly as I could tell, we had another M1A lover down in Palmdale. I had followed that up with a check on Frugal's new website and read some of TOM's stories. He liked the same guns I liked, except he had a .32 caliber Sauer & Sohn model 38H auto. I looked it up on Wiki and here's what I found.

“Sauer developed the 38H from their earlier semi-automatic pistols. It was necessary to compete with companies such as Mauser on the commercial market. However, with the outbreak of the war, most pistols went to various German police agencies, often equipped with a black leather holster. These guns were stamped by those agencies and some can still be found with the holster and additional magazine with which they were distributed. Sauer 38H pistols presented to Nazi officials usually featured custom engraving, ivory grips, and often gold inlay as well. For example, in September 2004 the Rock Island Auction Company sold a Sauer 38H, serial number 363573 that belonged to SS Colonel-General Joseph ‘Sepp’ Dietrich for \$43,125.00.” TOM said his serial number was 262734 and the grips were perfect. He didn't say what he thought his gun was worth, but it was probably priceless.

If we got down that way, I'd have to look him up; assuming he'd survived the war. From what I'd read, he was prepared for just about anything. He had a year's supply of meds and food and a fair amount of ammo. I wonder if he'd like some of the M118LR. I do know he'd give his eye teeth for an M82A1M and 5,000-rounds of Raufoss. Interestingly, he didn't claim to be a great shot, but had a standing joke in his stories referring to '600-yards'. I wondered what that was about.

Anyway, I got interested in that 'Nazi' .32 as he called it and found a website with a parts diagram. If he had a feather... we'd both be tickled. I found a 38H for sale at the same place the expensive one sold for and looked it up. They wanted \$800 and it looked like it had been run over by a Tiger Tank. It was pitted, scratched and I'm sure that they showed the good side.

The next trip out brought Will and I to Mojave and we stopped for some time and did a little plinking. I realized that we weren't that far from Palmdale and TOM had put his address in several stories. We drove down to look him up. I found the house easy enough from his descriptions but the front windows looked strange. I finally realized that there were sacks of concrete along the inside wall, leaving only an 8" high firing slit.

"Hello the house."

"Hello yourself; nice rifle."

"It's a Super Match with a Surefire Suppressor. Would you like to see it? I came all the way from Fresno to see your Nazi .32."

"You a squirrel?"

"If you mean do I belong to Frugal Squirrels website, the answer is no, but I've read some of your stories. Besides, I have a burning desire to ask you a question."

"How about you come to the garage door and I'll let you in. If you come to the front door, the dogs will eat you alive."

"Can do."

His little generator was running, probably to chill his refrigerators and/or freezer. The door rose and Will and I walked in. I heard the latch on the door to the house unlock and he reached over and pushed the button to lower the garage door. He sat up two folding chairs and opened a cabinet. There in one of those fold-over gun bags was this cute little gun.

"You have to remove the magazine and clear the action, I keep it loaded because I don't have the strength to do it most of the time."

"Man, this is nice. Mechanically sound?"

“Fit as a fiddle, I have a total of 5 8-round magazines but only 500-rounds of ammo. I can show you how to take it apart, but I can’t do it myself because of my hands.”

“Say, what’s this thing you sometimes mention in your stories about 600-yards?”

“Geraldo Rivera visited LA and I took him out in a story at 600-yards. I don’t like him and haven’t since he opened Al Capone’s safe. Then, that SOB drew that map in the sand. He ever shows up in Palmdale, I have a present for him.”

“Do you really have the guns you mentioned?”

“Hang on, I’ll be right back.”

He left and returned about a minute later carrying one of those huge 2 rifle Pelican cases. He unlocked both padlocks and opened the case. It contained his M1A loaded and Mossberg 590A1 with a sling. The rifled sported a well-oiled Springfield Armory Model 1909 sling.

“What do you have for ammo, TOM?”

“My name isn’t TOM, that’s my handle. Call me Gary, one R. I have 2,880-rounds of South African surplus, 500-rounds of 8-pellet reduced recoil 00 buckshot, 500 rounds of .32 and 2,000-rounds of Speer .45, 1,000 each of Lawman and Gold Dot.”

“How many high capacity magazines?”

“They’re illegal.”

“Maybe before the war, but not now.”

“I have 20.”

“Would you like some more ammo?”

“What caliber?”

“7.62×51mm, M118LR.”

“Oh, the good stuff, right out of Lake City.”

“No, right out of MCLB, Barstow.”

“I was going to go up there, but I don’t drive and no one would take me. I had a long list of things I really wanted to have.”

"I've read some of your stories. I don't have an M82A1M to spare. I can give you five cases of M118LR, two cases of M61s and one crate of LAW rockets."

"How many pints of blood do you want for that stuff?"

"No charge, it's a gift."

"Got any spare smoke grenades?"

"White ok?"

"Suits me, we just need something to put up a smoke screen."

"I suppose we can spare a dozen."

"I don't suppose you have an extra Suppressor, do you?"

"We don't usually carry spares Gary. However, since we were going to Mojave, I stocked one in with the M1A adapter. You'll need an alignment tool and I didn't bring one with me."

"I'll figure it out. Do you need anything? We have 50 pounds of popcorn I can spare, some pinto beans. You must have seen what we have; it's all in the garage."

"Let me ask you, is there anything you need since we obviously have more than you have."

"We're pretty well set. Sharon insisted I buy her and my daughter both Browning Hi-Powers and some Gold Dot 124gr +P ammo. I picked up a Mini-14 and managed to get a Butler Creek folding stock and a flash hider. I got 20 PMI 30 round magazines, but don't have enough ammo to fill them all just once."

"What's your pistol?"

"Taurus PT1911B with a total of 7 magazines."

"How much 5.56x45mm ammo do you want?"

"Would five cases be too much?"

"Not at all, I'll bring it when we come back with the alignment tool and the special pliers. It might be a month or more."

"Do you want a copy of Fleataxi's and my stories? I think I may even have a copy of Paradise and several others. I'll burn them all on a CD. I also have a spare copy of the

CD KI4U puts out, they shipped me two. Plus I have that fallout calculator, the seven_ten_rule.xls.”

“I have a copy of it, so you’re the guy who did that.”

“Did it work?”

“Yeah, it worked just fine, I owe you.”

“Feel free to come up with a Tac-50 rifle at any time.”

“I’ll tell you what, if I find one, it’s yours. Wait, what am I saying, we recovered one in Bakersfield and haven’t assigned it to anyone. Can’t give you all the ammo you want, but I can get you started. Would 1,000-rounds each of Hornady A-MAX 750gr match and Mk 211 MP be ok? How would you like an M21 with a Leopold scope and a suppressor installed? We can only spare one suppressor so I can’t put one on the M21 and give you one for your rifle.”

“Can you increase the .308 NATO to 10,000 rounds? You did the job in Bakersfield? That means you probably did Oildale, Chowchilla, San Luis Obispo and Fresno.”

“Keep that under your hat, it poor OpSec for you to know that.”

“Nothing, I know nothing.”

“You’re German?”

“Nine generations back, I was.”

“I had the impression from your stories that you were on the pudgy side.”

“You live on beans and rice for nearly 3 years and see how you look. I’m down from a 38” waist to slightly more than 34”. We ran out of fresh meat about 2 years back and Spam about 6 months later. We still have tuna, canned chicken and canned beef. We ran out of coffee some time back, but I got my shotgun and pistol and went salvaging. Got more Spam, canned Chicken and beef, but could only find Yuban coffee and the only thing worse than Yuban is Starbucks. Need cigarettes?”

“I don’t smoke.”

“Neither do I, but the cigarettes smoke like hell. We have one hell of a store of medicinal alcohol, if you need some for cleaning out wounds.”

“What kind?”

“Gentleman Jack, Chivas Regal, Jose Cuervo and Bombay Sapphire Gin. Don’t have any Bourbon or Rye.”

“Nice assortment, do you drink?”

“No, I had my last drink on 1Jan99. I’m a drunk and once I get started, I’d probably end up dead. Can I get you fellas a drink?”

“I’ve never tried Gentleman Jack.”

“Me either.”

“Mixed, straight up or on the rocks?”

“What kind of mix?”

“Seven-up, Squirt or ginger ale.”

Make mine Squirt.”

“Same for me thanks.”

We finished our drinks and hit the road, telling Gary we’d be back inside of 30 days. We camped in the desert and worked our way to Tehachapi the next day. There was only a token troop presence there, and we left the bodies to be taken care of by the residents. According one local, the state prison in the area had been on total lockdown since the war. According to the guards that lived in Tehachapi, they were expecting a breakout soon.

We returned to Fresno and made our report. I grabbed the Tac-50, 1,200-rounds of each of the two .50 caliber ammos and nine extra magazines. I also located the M21 and installed a Sure Fire suppressor. Will and I loaded the 10k-rounds of M118LR and half a dozen cans of Folgers. On the way down, we locate a locked grocery store and cleaned out what we could fit in the pickup and trailer, starting with the coffee and toilet paper. We also grabbed bread flour, yeast, shortening, sugar, corn meal and all of the Kool’s in the case. TOM had a radio, the same model as mine and when we’d finished unloading the truck and trailer. We discussed several frequencies to monitor.

He then asked for a favor, most of his gas drums were empty and he had a portable 7kw generator. Would it be too much trouble, he asked, to refill his drums. He had accumulated 16 55-gallon drums plus 12 5-gallon Blitz gas cans and had several pint and quarts of PRI-G. That took 3 trips but we were happy to oblige. When we were done, we again went over the radio frequencies and explained about the insurrection.

“I’m sorry fellas, my heart is in your fight, but my body isn’t up to it. The house two doors to the west is empty and I think I’ll set up on the second floor because it has a straight

view of the tract entrance. I have some 20x50 binos and will keep my eyes open. Is the M21 sighted in?"

"To 100 yards and it has a built in BDC tuned to the M118LR."

"I get my son-in law and his boys to move a minimum of furniture, plus the radios and antennas. I've never worked 40 meters before so that part should be interesting. I've heard that 40 meters (7.0–7.3 MHz) is considered the most reliable all-season DX band, and most popular at night, and extremely useful for medium distance contacts during the day. And, thanks for the coffee; I was worrying myself silly over our dwindling supply. You saw the FEMA Camp, right?"

"What FEMA Camp?"

"It's over on 10th Street West, north of the Mall. I haven't seen it, but I hear that it's ringed in by barbed wire, guarded by CNG troops and has a local FEMA representative as the camp superintendent. I don't get around very well, but if I could, I'd do something about the place myself."

"Maybe you can, just how good of a shot are you?"

"Don't believe that 600-yards crap, that was fiction. When we went to the range to sight in my M1A, my son Derek hit a 1 foot square metal plate at 400-yards with the open sights. I think the rifle is capable of more, but I've never bothered to install a scope."

"The one we brought you is right on the money out to 1,000-meters. All you need to do is dope the wind and adjust appropriately."

"Cripes, that weighs as much as my other Pelican case. If I take them all, I'll have to use my 4-wheel cart. Again thanks for everything. Keep your powder dry and watch your six."

TOM gave us directions on how to get to 10th Street West. The route he gave us took us past Blackbird Park, a display of aircraft formerly used by the military. I didn't recognize about half the aircraft and we could have stopped and looked at the plaque next to each aircraft. However, Will said we should get to that FEMA Camp and check it out; we might have a mission in Palmdale. If we need a place to hole up, TOM said he had a 1,000ft² back patio. We knew that because that's where he stored his gas drums.

o

"How big is it?"

"About 1,000ft square, a million ft². I see corner guard towers and one in the middle of each side for a total of eight. I see machineguns, but they're pointed inward."

“How big are they?”

“They look like .30-caliber.”

“What’s that fence like? Is that tangle foot at the base?”

“Nope, it’s razor wire.”

“Can you tell what the building in the center is?”

“It seems to be a combination mess hall and bathrooms. The lean to on the back side could be guard quarters, but I can’t tell from here.”

“How many guards do you see?”

“I see two per tower plus four on the main gate.”

“Twenty? They probably have three shifts, so it could easily be sixty. Any vehicles down there?”

“I see two, a Hummer and a school bus. Wait, there is a car pulling up to the main gate. They’re waving him through and he’s dressed in civilian clothes so that must be the FEMA guy.”

“We’ll need half of the teams to insure a rapid disablement of this facility. Let’s go home and figure this out. Use your digital camera and get a few pictures. We should be able to blow them up and print them out.”

“Do you want to take the freeway?”

“We’d better stick to Sierra Highway until we’re well north of Palmdale. That freeway goes right by the front of the Camp.”

Will took my advice and we went north on Sierra Highway to Avenue D and then turned west to pick up California route 14. Before we entered the freeway, I pulled out a road map and told Will to keep going, Avenue D lead to I-5 and it merged with CA 99 south of Bakersfield. Bakersfield was totally under the control of the locals and there wasn’t a liberal to be found, except 6’ under. It was even worse in Oildale; they displayed the corpses, wearing a sign on their necks that said, *Liberal*. Don’t claim you’re surprised, I told you about the people in Oildale.

We knew about the prison in Tehachapi but didn’t realize there was another west of Lancaster. This one had a 10,000-volt fence to keep the inmates in and they had back-up generators but were running low on fuel. Hell, they were running low on everything and had been on lockdown since the war, just like Tehachapi.

As of Fiscal Year 2006/2007, LAC had a total of 1,519 staff and an annual operating budget of \$100 million. As of September 2007, it had a design capacity of 2,300 but a total institution population of 4,976, for an occupancy rate of 216.3 percent.

LAC's 262 acres include the following facilities, among others:

- Level I housing ("Open dormitories without a secure perimeter").
- Level IV housing ("Cells, fenced or walled perimeters, electronic security, more staff and armed officers both inside and outside the installation").
- Reception Center (RC), which "provides short term housing to process, classify and evaluate incoming inmates."

California has a total of 45 prisons, federal, state and county. All were ordered into lock-down when the war erupted. We hadn't known that, but it was becoming apparent. We weren't exactly sure of what to do about the problem. State offenders were classified as I, II, III, IV with IV being kept in Maximum Security, but not quite up to the standards of Pelican Bay. The question was, where do you draw the line? I should point out that those 45 prisons included three that wouldn't be a problem, Los Angeles County Jail, the Jails of San Francisco and the San Diego Correctional Facility. I'm sure that I missed a few jails or lockups. Down in this area, we had two with level IV prisoners, Tehachapi and Lancaster. Level II: "Open dormitories with secure perimeter fences and armed coverage." Level III: "Individual cells, fenced perimeters and armed coverage."

Well, I had to tell what the other two levels were; leaving them out would have been like an incomplete sentence. In addition to the Reception Centers, there is one other level – Condemned (Cond): "Holds inmates with death sentences."

"To sum it up, gentlemen, we have two areas where I can see problems, FEMA Camps and California's prison population."

"Is anyone aware of other FEMA Camps? No? Get on the radio and find out. Sergeant Major, you'd better get with Sam and work out a plan to free the prisoners of that FEMA Camp in Palmdale. From what Sam says, it will take 4 teams. Discuss it and let me know. If there are actually 60 guards, we may need all of the teams."

"Tell me what you know of this TOM character."

"His arsenal is a M1A Loaded, Mossberg 590A1 with sling and he carries a Taurus PT1911B. His wife and daughter have Browning Hi-Powers loaded with Gold Dot 124gr +P. He showed me a pistol, a model 38H, that he claimed came off a dead Nazi in WW II. He said that the only ammo it worked well with was the 71gr Federal round nose. He's a real character, spends his time sitting in a wheelchair that doesn't have an operating battery. They lined the whole inside front of their house with sacks of cement, stacked long ways. He said all he had was South African surplus and he missed the boat when it was \$187 a case of 980 rounds."

Bad Times – Chapter 23

“So you gave him ten cases of M118LR and that M21 tactical we picked up along with the Tac-50 and 1,200-rounds each of Hornady A-MAX and Mk 211 MP?”

“Exactly. He knows the area and told me he has lived there since November '87. Said he could haul his guns on a four wheel cart if necessary. He also said that the guy across the street was a Green Beret Captain in Vietnam. I suspect that he'll loan his M1A to his friend and keep the M21.

“But can he shoot?”

“Everyone can shoot; it's just a question of how well they can shoot. He said his son used his M1A at a range and hit a steel plate at 400 yards with open sights.”

“Sounds like sniper material.”

“He lives in Arkansas and belongs to the Arkansas National Guard. Gary said he'd just made E-8.”

“That either a Master Sergeant or a First Sergeant.”

“I know. Anyway, he's now in artillery, having started out in the M1A1 Abrams.”

“How long has he been in?”

“I'm sorry but I didn't think to ask. TOM said when he died; his son got all of his personal weapons and ammo.”

“Do you think he'd be up to helping us?”

“Who, TOM or Derek?”

“TOM. I think our best approach to this thing is to use the China Lake Pump-Action Grenade Launcher with HE rounds. We can blow up the guard stands instead of worrying about individual targets. We'll get plenty of those when they start pouring out of that lean to.”

“What do you want to do with the FEMA guy?”

“How about we turn him over to the residents of Oildale?”

“That's one necktie party I wouldn't mind seeing.”

o

“Hey Gary, do you mind if we put our teams up on your patio?”

“You’re welcome to Sam. Going after that FEMA Camp?”

“How did you know?”

“I may have been born yesterday, but I stayed up all night. I tried that M21 and it didn’t suit me. I was having problems with the eye relief. I loaned it to my neighbor Lance, the Green Beret guy. He’s one hell of a shot, sniper material. However, he’s long in the tooth at 71. He carries a Smith and Wesson .357 magnum for a handgun, but I don’t know the model, just that it has a 4” barrel.”

“Do you usually stay up all night?”

“Yes I do, Amy and Sharon have the day watch.”

“How old are you?”

“I’m younger, only 70.”

“How do you like the Tac-50?”

“I fell in love the moment I set eyes on it. That’s one heavy SOB. I set the range to 1,000-meters and fired one round of the Hornady. That was right on target, so I changed the setting to Mk211 and fired a second round. I went two for two and called it quits. Cleaned the rifle and put it up. Say, is it ok to use Breakfree CLP on it?”

“As far as I know, yes, didn’t you read the manual?”

“You didn’t give me one.”

“Sorry.”

“Yes I read the manual; I have it on my computer along with about one-half million other files. Just so you know, it says, ‘Thoroughly dry all other components and apply a light coating of Break Free or another approved lubricant immediately. It talks about a cleaning solvent but doesn’t mention a brand.’”

“I use Hoppes #9. If you can get to that Pep Boys store, get a can of carburetor cleaner.”

“I’ll get some. We have a pot of beans cooking if you’d care to join us.”

“I couldn’t look a pinto bean in the eye.”

“We’re cooking Great Northern beans.”

“I’ll ask around. How is the coffee holding out?”

“You see, I was out of coffee and smokes, so when you brought the coffee, I forced my wife to go looking for smokes. We cleaned out two cigarettes stores that hadn’t already been looted. Then we went to Smart and Final in Iris to see about coffee. We made out like bandits on coffee and smokes and went to the Smart and Final in Lancaster to see if we could repeat our luck.”

“Did you?”

“Did I what?”

“Repeat your luck?”

“Where?”

“At Smart and Final in Lancaster.”

“Oh yeah, we got everything that wasn’t nailed down. Coffee, cigarettes, beans, rice, you name it and we got it. We had to go steal a U Haul to get it all home so since we had a truck, we returned to the Palmdale Smart and Final and cleaned it out. I think I missed my calling; I should have been a thief. Got the garage filled to the brim.”

“I see you have your rifle and shotgun out, have you had trouble?”

“We had some gangbangers walk through the tract. Amy had the shotgun and I had the rifle, but we didn’t poke them through the firing slit and they kept going.”

“You think the bags of concrete will stop a bullet?”

“Damned if I know, but it’s better than plain stucco.”

“Gary, dinner is ready.”

“You’d better go ask your people if they want some beans and homemade bread.”

We joined them, mostly to be polite, but her homemade bread was delicious. Beans don’t have much flavor, especially Great Northern beans. They had cold canned peaches for dessert and they were a welcome treat. Gary said his friends call him Gar-Bear, so from now on that’s what it will be. He was generous with his booze and I wonder if he really is an alcoholic, it didn’t seem to bother him when we drank. He had a Coke or two and complained that Coke pissed him off when they took C2 off the market.

The next morning we left and moved slowly into position. We didn’t have 4 of the China Lake Grenade launchers but we did have those M203s. Our plan was simple, take out

the guard towers with the 40mm grenades and start lobbing them into the lean to. We had agreed that Gene would give the go signal and it seemed awfully slow coming.

Around 7:45, he said, "Five minutes."

Not a minute later, a bus pulled in with the new guard shift. If the guards didn't live in that lean to, who did? A much closer look revealed that it was the kitchen that supported the mess hall and all the kitchen workers were residents of the camp.

"Back down for now. Sam, you and Will follow the bus and try to take one of those guards prisoner. Blindfold him and bring him back to TOM's. We'll be waiting there to interrogate him and try to get the real story on that camp."

"You done already? How many people did you free?"

"None, that place isn't what it first appeared to be. What we thought might be guards quarters turned out to be a kitchen. Sam and Will should be here soon with a prisoner."

"So much for OpSec, I was really keeping my head down."

"He will be blindfolded so he won't know where you live."

"Right, like they can't fly over the place in a helicopter and pick out the largest covered patio in Palmdale."

"If it proves to be a problem, we'll deal with it. I can live with one misjudgment, but these things have a way of getting away from people. At this point, we need information so we'll know if that's a FEMA Camp or not. If it is, is it a friendly or unfriendly FEMA Camp? It does have razor wire, but it's on both sides of the lower two stands of barbed wire. It could be as much to keep people out as to keep them in. Moreover, I didn't see any machineguns in those towers."

"There you go, the Sergeant of the Guard. If anyone knows anything, it ought to be him."

"We're not going to remove your blindfold for now, the homeowner doesn't want you to know what his home looks like. I will tell you this much, I am a General Officer of the United States Army. I am accompanied by a Naval Lieutenant and a Coast Guard Lieutenant Junior Grade. I am also accompanied by some, shall we say partisans. I want a factual account of what that camp is all about."

"Are you really a no shit General?"

"Four stars, Sergeant."

“Well you’re right about it being a FEMA Camp. If you’ve observed it for very long, you must know that we have a guard shift of 20 people and three shifts. The Camp is run by the residents. They all live in tents because it was the best we could do. The Corps of Engineers brought in those bathrooms and erected a wall across the front to create an enclosed mess hall with the kitchen providing the back wall with its lean to. Those semis you see making deliveries contain food that we’ve managed to scrounge up to feed the people in the Camp. Hell, they eat better than we do.”

“I had a report of a Camp Administrator.”

“Are you referring to that FEMA lacky? Yeah, he shows up about once a week to see how everyone is doing, if anyone needs medical care, and so forth. He’s about like that guy down in New Orleans, harmless. I’m sure his superior is telling him what a fine job he is doing. Hell, the only people doing anything are the residents and the guard force. We have M240s in case someone tries to attack the camp. However, most of the time, we don’t mount them and leave them standing against the inside wall of the guard tower.”

“Sergeant, this is your lucky day.”

“What do you mean sir?”

“I had a sizeable force of snipers about 3 minutes away from wiping out those guard towers and freeing the prisoners.”

“I’d have liked to have seen that, General; you couldn’t get the people out of that camp at the point of a gun. They have it made, 3 hot’s and a cot, a shower every day and free food. All they have to do is help in the kitchen once in a while or police the grounds and pick up trash. Can I take my blindfold off now?”

“No reprisals?”

“Nada.”

“Go ahead.”

“Where’s Gary, I about half figured he was around here somewhere, but I didn’t realize I was sitting on his back patio.”

“You know him?”

“I poured this patio. My name is Joe Brolin.”

“Hey Joe, long time, no see; I thought you were still in Sacramento.”

“Joined the Guard and got shipped down here to supervise the guards of a FEMA Camp. Chris knew I was here. General, if you want to go talk to the residents, I’ll arrange it. No shit four stars, too.”

“I’m retired. What’s the deal on the CNG?”

“We’re not getting paid and I’ve heard that some units organized what you might term a protection racket. They let us eat in the resident mess hall and supply us with smokes and beer.”

“Do you want us to give you a ride back?”

“Nah, Chris will take me. You need anything else?”

“No, thank you.”

“How about the next time you want to know something you just ask?”

“It’s all in your point of view; from my point of view, we did.”

“I’ll see you later Gary.”

“Come by some time Joe and I mix you a drink.”

“We have to go too Gar-Bear. Would you mind telling me something?”

“That depends on what you want to know.”

“The M1A rifle, what is there about it that you apparently find so irresistible?”

“Back during the late fifties when the M14 was under development, I read an article in some magazine, maybe Argosy. I wanted ever since. The guns you and I have aren’t mil spec. but there one of the finest made US rifles. I’ve also owned a Springfield, 1903A3 and it was a really accurate firearm. If there’s one criterion I consider when buying a firearm, it is knock down power. That’s all the reasons I can think of.”

“We’ve got to go, are you all set?”

“As well as I can be under the circumstances, thanks.”

o

“I’m just happy we didn’t involve the Fresno Militia in that process,” Gene said when we got home.

“Why is that?”

“It’s was embarrassing enough without having an audience. Let this be a lesson to us to do a better job on our Intel. How long did you watch the Camp?”

“About 5-6 hours.”

“You assumed they did shift changes every four hours?”

“Yes, we did; that’s pretty much standard military protocol, isn’t it?”

“In normal times it would be but these aren’t normal times. Our country is essentially leaderless. How long have I been here, 2-3 years?”

“At least that long, you were the first to show up outside of our family members Gene. I’ll tell you, I’ve lost track of time; hell I’m lucky if I even know which season it is anymore.”

“Same subject, different thrust; what are we hearing on the shortwave radios?”

“I’ll give the summary,” Ruth said. “More states are up in arms and by last count, there were insurrections to some degree in every state of the lower 48.”

“What area is the most active?”

“That would be the southeastern US, it’s more like a continuation of the War of Northern Aggression, that’s what they’re calling it, than a new insurrection. We are having a Civil War aren’t we? I mean it’s the people against the government isn’t it?”

“I think the more politically correct term would be the Second American Revolution. Our Founding Fathers warned us that this could happen. And, over the course of 235, or is it 240, years it has. Jefferson said, *God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. The people cannot be all, and always, well informed. The part which is wrong will be discontented, in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. If they remain quiet under such misconceptions, it is lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. ... What country before ever existed a century and half without a rebellion? And what country can preserve its liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.* He also said, *The strongest reason for the people to retain their right to keep and bear arms is as a last resort to protect themselves against tyranny in government.*’ Another quote I liked was, *‘I hold it, that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical.’*”

“Jefferson was a prophet; he foresaw the circumstances that led to WW III.”

“What did he say?”

We are overdone with banking institutions which have banished the precious metals and substituted a more fluctuating and unsafe medium, that these have withdrawn capital from useful improvements and employments to nourish idleness, that the wars of the world have swollen our commerce beyond the wholesome limits of exchanging our own productions for our own wants, and that, for the emolument of a small proportion of our society who prefer these demoralizing pursuits to labors useful to the whole, the peace of the whole is endangered and all our present difficulties produced, are evils more easily to be deplored than remedied.

“The problem was that people forget statements like that because they were made nearly 200 years before the advent of nuclear weapons. Ruth has any Patriot Group talked about gaining access to Cheyenne Mountain?”

“There were some references to *The Mountain* from a Colorado group. They didn’t say much on the radio, but I had the impression that they thought it couldn’t be done.”

“But, it can be!”

“Come on Gene, that shelter is buried in a mountain and has 25-ton blast doors, right?”

“Yes, Sam, it does. Think about it, you build a shelter, what did you include besides a blast door?”

“An AV-150 to filter the air; oh, you’re saying to cut off their air and force them to come out?”

“They would have to open the blast door at the minimum. I just happen to know where the air intakes are. Blast valves, installed in reinforced concrete bulkheads, have been placed in the exhaust and air intake supply, as well as water, fuel, and sewer lines. Sensors at the North and South Portal entrances will detect overpressure waves from a nuclear explosion, causing the valves to close and protect the complex. Incoming air may be filtered through a system of chemical/biological/radiological/nuclear filters to remove harmful germs and/or radioactive and chemical particles. The fresh air intake is mainly from the south portal access which is 17½ feet high and 15 feet wide and linked to the north portal access which is 22½ feet high and 29 feet wide. The entire tunnel from north to south entry portals is nine-tenths of a mile long.”

“Do we have to go there to help them?”

“I think we should be able to pass the information by radio. I should be able to give them precise location information. Ruth, I assume that you wrote down their frequencies?”

“Yes, I did, but they seem to change them frequently. I suppose that’s what you men call OpSec. I wouldn’t be surprised if they still monitor the older main frequency, I’ve

heard they make a call and the responder would say, 'Go to channel nnn,' which I suppose is another, prearranged channel. So far, when they've done that, I've lost them."

"Have you talked to them?"

"I didn't need to, my main mission was to gather information and there was plenty to be had without talking."

"I'll try contacting them tonight and try and find out if they're interested in the information."

"What are you going to do if they are?"

"If you cut the head off a snake, it dies."

"True, but that doesn't mean that it still can't bite you."

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PROSSER, Wash. (AP) - Turns out, even beheaded rattlesnakes can be dangerous.

That's what 53-year-old Danny Anderson learned as he was feeding his horses Monday night, when a 5-foot rattler slithered onto his central Washington property, about 50 miles southeast of Yakima.

Anderson and his 27-year-old son, Benjamin, pinned the snake with an irrigation pipe and cut off its head with a shovel. A few more strikes to the head left it sitting under a pickup truck.

"When I reached down to pick up the head, it raised around and did a backflip almost, and bit my finger," Anderson said. "I had to shake my hand real hard to get it to let loose."

His wife insisted they go to the hospital, and by the time they arrived at Prosser Memorial Hospital 10 minutes later, Anderson's tongue was swollen and the venom was spreading. He then was taken by ambulance 30 miles to a Richland hospital to get the full series of six shots he needed.

The snake head ended up in the bed of his pickup, and Anderson landed in the hospital until Wednesday afternoon.

Mike Livingston, a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist, said the area where the Anderson's live is near prime snake habitat. But he said he had never heard of anyone being bit by a decapitated snake before.

"That's really surprising but that's an important thing to tell people," he said. "It may

have been just a reflex on the part of the snake."

If another rattlesnake comes along, Anderson said he'll likely try to kill it again, but said he'll grab a shovel and bury it right there.

"It still gives me the creeps to think that son-of-a-gun could do that," he said.

I don't like snakes of any description, be they a gopher snake or a rattlesnake. Down there around Palmdale, we had to be darned careful when we surrounded the Camp because it was Mojave Green territory. Rattlesnake venoms are complex cocktails of enzymes and other proteins that vary greatly in composition and effects, not only between species, but also between geographic populations within the same species. *C. scutulatus* is widely regarded as producing one of the most toxic snake venoms in the New World, based on LD₅₀ studies in laboratory mice. Based on median LD₅₀ values in lab mice, Venom A bite from Mohave rattlesnakes is more than ten times as toxic as Venom B, which lacks Mojave toxin. The snake in this area had type A venom. Primarily a snake of high desert or lower mountain slopes, they are often found near scrub brush such as mesquite and creosote, but may also reside in lowland areas of sparse vegetation, among cacti, Joshua tree forests, or grassy plains.

One other thing bad about Palmdale and the Mojave Desert in general was that it was bounded by earthquake faults. They had the San Andreas running right through south Palmdale, the Garland fault to the north running a couple of hundred miles from the San Andreas northeast where it joined another fault. Frankly, I was surprised that the nukes on LA hadn't popped the cork on the San Andreas. But, the only time we were in LA after the war was that shopping trip and maybe there had been an earthquake. How could a person tell in the aftermath of three nukes?

"I established contact with that group in Colorado last night. They wanted the information I had so I passed it on to them. They asked how I could be so sure about the information and I had to explain who I was and what happened."

"So, are they going to attack Cheyenne Mountain?"

"I think the exact quote was that they'd smoke them out. I don't believe they mean that literally, the filters would prevent that. However, if they block the air filters, the people will be forced out when their air runs out."

"Did they say when?"

Bad Times – Chapter 24

“I think one of them must be related to you Sam. They said they’d think on it.”

◦

“Mr. President.”

“Yes, General?”

“Sir, we have a major problem. Someone has blocked the air intakes for this facility.”

“Can’t you switch the exhaust to the intakes?”

“They’re blocked too. Our CO₂ level is rising and we can’t hold out forever, even with the CO₂ scrubbers we have.”

“So we have weapons to arm everyone?”

“Yes sir.”

“Do it and then crack one of the two blast doors. Shoot anyone who tries to enter.”

“But, we can’t do that.”

“Why not?”

“They must be American citizens.”

“If I have to promote the lowest ranking private or whatever to be in command, I will. Now do it.”

“I’ll follow your orders, Mr. President, but only with great reluctance and my report will show that I objected strenuously.”

“I need a new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs,” he thought.

◦

“Ruth, correct me if I’m wrong, but, you said, *that would be the southeastern US, it’s more like a continuation of the War of Northern Aggression, that’s what they’re calling it, than a new insurrection. We are having a Civil War aren’t we? I mean it’s the people against the government isn’t it?* didn’t you?”

“Yes I did, that’s what I heard.”

“The most destructive War in American history was the Civil War. That excludes WW III but includes all others. The north had 360,000 dead and the south had 258,000 dead. We will not have another Civil War on my watch, not while I draw one breath. We’ve grown up some since that happened about 150 years ago. We are first, last and always Americans, united as it were against tyranny. We may have a Revolution, but that’s not the same because all a Revolution is, in the final analysis, it holding the government accountable for its actions. I need all of your frequency information so I can talk to our brothers-in-arms in the southeastern US.”

I wonder who Gene used for a speech writer; sometimes he really made a point. Could be he wrote his own speeches, which in my mind made him a likely candidate to replace the now sitting President. He understood the system and what was wrong with it. His honor wouldn’t allow him to carry out orders in violation of his oath of office. He’d stopped just short of bringing up his mother, the flag and apple pie.

I didn’t know how many people had been killed in the attack by the Chinese and the aftermath; if I were to hazard a guess, somewhere between 100 million and 200 million. I seem to do that a lot these days, hazard guesses. Now, if the General could get the remaining 100 plus million pulling together, rather than cross purpose, we could get our country back from the politicians.

This century really revealed how far we’d sunk. Bush won 2000, although he had less votes than Al Gore. He was a wartime President in 2004 and the election was so narrow that it ended up depending on Ohio. Dean and Kerry decided not to contest the election and Bush was reelected. The controversy about his truthfulness grew to the point that after Osama Obama and John McCain had their nominations sewn up; efforts were made to impeach the President. If you can believe it, Nancy Dumbhead, the Speaker of the House kept that from happening.

“How many groups did you contact?”

“I was able to contact four major groups and 3 smaller ones. I explained who I was and what we had been doing. I believe I convinced them that we’re all in this together and we want to fight the government as much as they do. I emphasized states’ rights as much as possible and told them about the president wanting to pick up the guns.”

“Will they go along with us?”

“I believe they will. They attacked MCLB, Albany and are very well equipped. There are some major plants and arsenals in the southeastern part of the US and they’ve worked at securing those locations, including Pine Bluff and Redstone. The largest of the groups has a retired Major General involved and we knew each other. That group was the easiest to convince. The groups that gave me the most trouble were those 3 smaller ones.”

“Did they agree?”

"I referred them to the larger group as a way to prove my bona fide's. They told me that they would check, but didn't make any promises."

"Ok, what next?"

"We wait until we hear from the southerners and the folks in Colorado. Do you know who William S. Lind is?"

"I do; he's a paleoconservative who never spent a day in uniform. He's especially critical of our military and how we fight wars. He wrote some paper, was it called FMFM-1A Fourth Generation War?"

"That's right, Sam, he's the man who spends his time talking about 4th GW. Did you ever stop to compare what we're doing with what he writes about?"

"I haven't, but maybe I should. I didn't fight in Vietnam and by most measures that was our first 4th GW, which signifies the nation states' loss of their monopoly on combat forces, returning in a sense to the uncontrolled combat of pre-modern times. I hate to say it, but we lost. I sometimes think that our military is still locked in 2nd GW, tactics of linear fire and movement, with reliance on indirect fire, and hasn't advanced to 3rd GW, tactics of infiltration to bypass and collapse the enemy's combat forces rather than seeking to close with and destroy them; and defense in depth. 1st GW are the tactics of line and column; which developed in the age of the smoothbore musket, and probably died with Napoleon."

"Not quite; in this country, they died with the Civil War. We found the next series of wars as 2nd GW into WW II. During WW II, we embraced 3rd GW and that has been our pattern since."

"But this Revolution is 4th GW?"

"We're fighting as insurgents just like the Viet Cong, except we're revolting against TPTB in hopes of restoring the Constitution."

"And then rewrite it?"

"Reorganize it as discussed by the Founding Fathers. It isn't broke so it doesn't need fixed, it just needs clarification. If the 2nd Amendment had been Article 1, Section 9, would anyone question the right of the people to keep and bear arms? You're shaking your head, I thought not. We would need to incorporate the Amendments into the body in such a way that they wouldn't be subject to interpretation."

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At this point in time, the fuse was lit and all we could do was sit back and wait for the explosion that was surely coming. Any large cities that hadn't been hit by the Chinese weapons would have to be subdued. Any governmental officials who were living in the myth that nothing had changed had to be captured and imprisoned, at least for now. There would probably be a lot of kangaroo courts aka show trials where the defendants wouldn't be allowed to present any evidence in their own defense. That would, no doubt, be sorted out later.

Once the Executive Branch and the Legislative Branch were ousted, the state Governors or their successors could appoint temporary legislators who could, in turn, hold the Executive Branch accountable. The Executive Branch had a lot to answer for, including the failure to provide relief and aid to the nation as a whole plus other high crimes and misdemeanors.

"I heard from Colorado last night."

"Don't stop there, what happened?"

"They are holding everyone from Cheyenne Mountain in one of the local prisons. Those southern boys overcame resistance in several large cities and believe they are in overall control. They also seized the Greenbrier and Mt. Weather."

"Good, now what?"

"We need to get to Sacramento and determine who is running the state. I told everyone that I talked to last night to do the same thing. We haven't had elections in so long that none of the House and $\frac{2}{3}$ of the Senate are no longer legally in office. The Governors' can make temporary appointments until elections can be organized. We'll probably need to hold a Second Constitutional Convention to roll the provisions of the Amendments into the body of the Constitution. Like I said before, all it needs is to be clarified."

"Are you going to run for office Gene?"

"I wasn't planning on doing so."

"Is it ok if I go to Sacramento with you?"

"The more the merrier, of course you can go. You have something in mind?"

"I'm thinking on it."

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That was a year ago and I had a chance to talk to the Lt. Governor who was now the Governor. Somehow, Gene ended up being a California Senator and a delegate to the Second Constitutional Convention. Just as he said, wise minds prevailed and they didn't

really rewrite the document, they mainly rolled it up into a ball. To eliminate Courts interpreting what the Convention meant, they included definitions and instructions. They also brought the language up to date, which helped a lot. The revised Constitution was ratified with no states failing to ratify, including the southern states. The most important provision had to deal with states' rights, which was no longer an Amendment:

“The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”

It was 100% clear that the government derived its power from the people. The new purpose of the federal government primarily became to establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense and promote the general welfare. They eliminated the income tax, replacing it with a very small federal sales tax, even though a sales tax is considered to be a regressive tax. That depends on the view one takes of the tax.

A lot of things have happened since then. Gene was hounded until he agreed to add his name to the people running for President. His major opposition came from Colorado and Alabama. All three candidates were running on a Libertarian platform. The differences among the candidates was paper thin, all three had attended the Constitutional Convention.

The central tenet of libertarianism is the principle of liberty, namely individual liberty. To libertarians, an individual human being is sovereign over his/her body, extending to life, liberty and property. As such, rights-theory libertarians define liberty as being completely free in action, whilst not initiating force or fraud against the life, liberty or property of another human being. Thomas Jefferson stated, *Rightful liberty is unobstructed action according to our will within limits drawn around us by the equal rights of others.* Jefferson also said *No man has a natural right to commit aggression on the equal rights of another, and this is all from which the laws ought to restrain him.* These concepts are otherwise known as the law of equal liberty or the non-aggression principle.

I'd have probably stayed a Republican, if there had still been a Republican Party. There wasn't, so I switched to Libertarian myself. Under the new election rules, all three candidates ran and if no one had a simple majority, a runoff election was held with the winner becoming President and the loser becoming Vice President. Under the modified 25th Amendment, now part of the Constitution, a third place finisher would become Vice President if the post became vacant. Gene explained the reasoning behind that: “Sam, the people have voted for one of the candidates and #1 is President, #2 is Vice President and #3 is back up and so on. These are candidates that the population, as a whole, have reviewed and cast votes for.

On the home front, we acquired a section of prime farming ground, a section of nut trees and a section of fruit trees. As a result, we became big time farmers, albeit late in life. We had our children and Gene's children to run the farms and we truly prospered. For one thing, with a new Constitution, all of those old laws, for example the NFA of

1934, the GCA of 1968 and the FOPA of 1986 became historical laws unrelated to the new Constitution and unenforceable. I immediately took advantage of that before they changed their minds. I didn't have one of everything, but we did have several of everything we wanted.

Because we weren't fighting wars in half the countries of the world there was no dearth of surplus ammo available at a very reasonable price; all kinds, including the Mk 211 MP, the M118LR and .50-caliber match ball. Good brands, too, Lake City, Winchester, Hornady and so forth.

I wondered why Russia hadn't invaded the US after the Chinese struck. Gene explained that recent information indicated that Russia had its own problems including China nuking it. However, the nuclear winter that followed limited their abilities to wage war and they settled for trading partnerships with European countries. They also became the #1 supplier of oil and gas to the world as a whole. Left with no other choice, the US opened up offshore drilling and began to build new refineries. The term Environmentalist was about as popular as being called a Communist in the '50 and '60s. In addition, technology was perfected to allow us to recover the oil from the oil shale and convert coal to liquid hydrocarbons. There was only limited amounts of biofuels produced, mainly ethanol for gasohol.

Perhaps WW III was the worst disaster to ever befall the US, but I sometimes wonder because those of us that were prepared and survived ended up with a far better country. We got a chance to start over, as it were. I sometimes think about that old codger in Palmdale, TOM. He commented that if he had his way, he'd have a gun case filled with his favorite arms and possibly a few HK-417s. That man positively loved the 7.62x51mm NATO cartridge. I wonder if he's still around, maybe I should drive down just to visit.

AFTERWORD: There turned out to be more real patriots around the country than we first thought. I'm not sure how to define them, other than saying they were Jeffersonian Republicans. Now days they went by the title Libertarians, it was the same difference. The election process for the President and Vice President wasn't something new; it was very old and reflected how Presidents had been elected in the early years. Like Gene told me, we backed up a step rather than trying to make something better. I made that trip to see TOM, and he was still sitting in his window watching the world go by. He and his family were well stocked with food and his daughter had finished her Master's Degree in social work (MSW). She was working for Los Angeles County in the Lancaster office.

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